



House of Commons  
Women and Equalities  
Committee

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**Fathers and the  
workplace**

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**First Report of Session 2017–19**

*Report, together with formal minutes  
relating to the report*

*Ordered by the House of Commons  
to be printed 7 March 2018*

## Women and Equalities Committee

The Women and Equalities Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration and policy of the Government Equalities Office (GEO).

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Evidence relating to this report is published on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

### Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Judith Boyce (Clerk), Luanne Middleton (Second Clerk), Holly Dustin, Tansy Hutchinson, and Shai Jacobs (Committee Specialists), Axell Kaubo (Inquiry Manager), Alexandra Hunter-Wainwright (Senior Committee Assistant), Mandy Sullivan (Committee Assistant), and Liz Parratt and Simon Horswell (Media Officers).

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## Summary

The Government must reform workplace policies to support fathers to better balance their parental responsibilities and work and to ensure they meet the needs of the twenty-first century family. Fathers in particular want to be supported at work to take a more equal share of childcare when children are young.

The Government says it wants to “enable families to share caring roles more easily and equitably to deliver positive employment outcomes.”<sup>1</sup> However, we have heard evidence from employer organisations, unions, researchers, think-tanks and experts, but most importantly from fathers and mothers themselves, that the current policies supporting fathers in the workplace do not deliver what they promise, despite good intentions. This is particularly the case for less well-off fathers. The right to request flexible working has not created the necessary cultural change in the workplace and the Government itself told us that its shared parental leave policy, intended to allow fathers to share care in their child’s first year, will not meet its objective for most fathers. The Government’s campaign in 2018 to promote shared parental leave is welcome but will not be enough to deliver the kind of change the Government wants to see for fathers and their families.

Paid paternity leave was only introduced in the UK in 2003, and this historical lack of workplace support for fathers both reflects and reinforces cultural assumptions about traditional gender roles where the father is the breadwinner and the mother is the primary carer. While we recognise and welcome the positive steps forward there have been for working fathers in recent years, we do not think they should have to wait longer for workplace policies to catch up with the social changes that are taking place in men and women’s lives. Incremental change now will not meet the needs of fathers, mothers, children or the economy in the future.

Our recommendations are framed to balance the needs of fathers, mothers and employers. Most of all, they are intended to help the Government to deliver its objectives of creating real change in the lives of fathers and mothers. Our key recommendations are:

- Fathers who are employees should be entitled to paid time off to attend antenatal appointments as a day-one right. The Government should consider whether the entitlement to attend two appointments is sufficiently supportive for parents of multiple babies or where other factors mean additional appointments are required;
- Statutory paternity pay should be paid at 90 per cent of the father’s pay (capped for higher earners) to ensure that all fathers, regardless of income, can be at home around the time of their child’s birth;
- The Government should consider the costs and benefits of introducing a new policy of 12 weeks’ dedicated leave for fathers in the child’s first year to replace shared parental leave when it reviews this policy in 2018;

- The Government should seek to legislate immediately to make a reality the Prime Minister's call for all jobs to be advertised as flexible from day one, unless there are solid business reasons not to;
- The Government should act now to harmonise workplace rights for fathers who are agency workers or self-employed with those for employed fathers where practical;
- To help drive the cultural change in the workplace that the Government wishes to see, it should consider the benefits of amending the protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010 to add an additional characteristic of 'paternity', looking at what period such a characteristic would cover and to which groups of working fathers it would apply.

# 1 Introduction

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1. Modern families face a range of challenges as they seek the right balance between working and family life. Just as mothers have sought equality in access to employment, fathers increasingly want to combine work with time spent fulfilling childcare responsibilities. Reforms to support for working mothers were introduced following the Second World War<sup>2</sup> and accelerated from the 1970s onwards as a result of campaigns against sex discrimination in the workplace.<sup>3</sup> Workplace support for fathers, in contrast, began developing in the UK much more recently; paid statutory paternity leave was introduced as recently as 2003, and although fathers' participation in the active care of their babies and young children has increased steadily in the last half century, policy has not kept up with the pace of social change.<sup>4</sup>

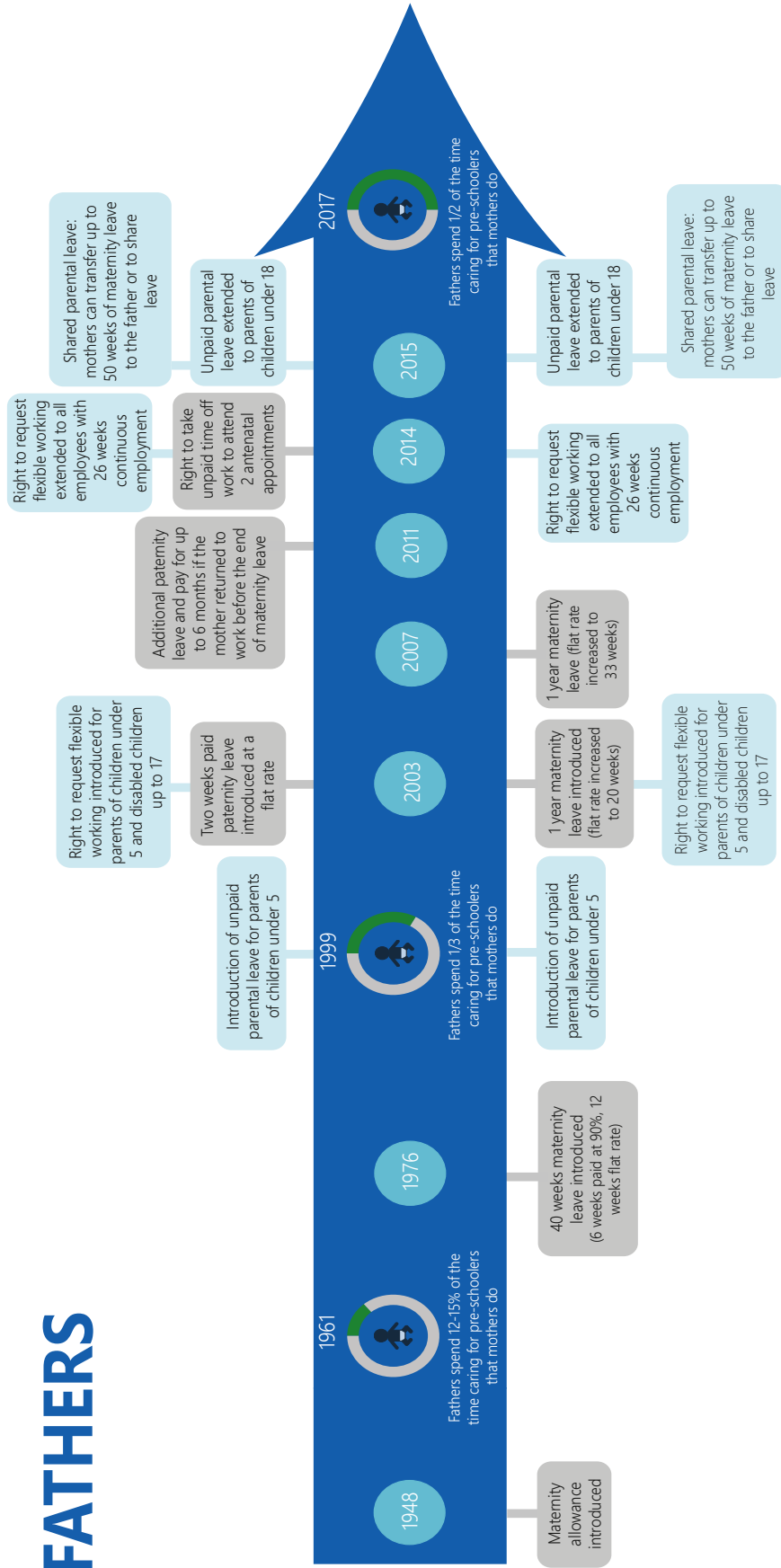
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2 Gov.uk, [Maternity Allowance Background](#), accessed March 2018

3 British Library, [The domestic division of labour](#), 8 March 2013

4 Barnado's ([FWP0024](#))

# FATHERS



Source: OECD [https://www.oecd.org/els/family/PF2\\_5\\_Trends\\_in\\_leave\\_entitlements\\_around\\_childbirth\\_annex.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/els/family/PF2_5_Trends_in_leave_entitlements_around_childbirth_annex.pdf)

# MOTHERS



## Benefits for children of fathers taking paternity leave

2. International research shows that children benefit when fathers take paternity leave. Fathers' leave-taking, especially of more than two weeks, is associated with more involvement in childcare which, in turn, is linked to better outcomes for children. This includes performing better on cognitive tests and being better prepared to start school (as shown by studies from Australia and Norway), and a downward trend in young children's injuries (in a study in Sweden). In the UK, when fathers did not take paternity leave, their three-year-olds were more likely to have developmental problems.<sup>5</sup> One father told us that "empathetic and supportive fatherhood contributes to effective child development and reduces the potential for social problems."<sup>6</sup>

## Fathers' changing attitudes to caring for their children

3. Fathers are carrying out a greater proportion of childcare than ever before. In 1961 the amount of time fathers spent caring for pre-schoolers was 12 to 15 per cent of the time spent doing so by mothers; by 2017 it was almost half, meaning that for every hour a mother devotes to caring for a young child a father now devotes, on average, 30 minutes.<sup>7</sup>

4. The evidence is that fathers increasingly want to spend more time caring for their children, and that this is particularly true of a younger generation of fathers.<sup>8</sup> The Modern Families Index 2017 found that, when asked whether they would assess their childcare needs before taking a new job or promotion, 76 per cent of younger fathers said they would.<sup>9</sup> Sarah Jackson of Working Families, which publishes The Modern Families Index, told us that younger fathers often find that they do not have the role they want: "There is an expectation among younger couples that there will be equality at home and equality at work: so he is going to be an active father and she is going to be active in the workforce. They are not getting that."<sup>10</sup>

5. Professor Margaret O'Brien, Director of the Thomas Coram Unit at University College London, described the phenomenon of "work-family conflict", in which work negatively affects family life and responsibilities, and family responsibilities negatively affect work.<sup>11</sup> This feeling of conflict was reflected in the evidence that we received from fathers themselves. One told us about the decision he made to change his work patterns: "I was travelling all the time and working six days a week. At some point you just make the decision you want to spend some time with the kids. You will not get those years back."<sup>12</sup>

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5 Fatherhood Institute, [Why paternity leave matters for young children](#)

6 A member of the public (FWP0036)

7 Fatherhood Institute, [Cash or Carry? Fathers combining work and care in the UK](#), December 2017

8 Trades Union Congress, [Better jobs for mums and dads](#), 2017

9 [The Modern Families Index 2017](#)

10 Q1 [Sarah Jackson] (Session 2016–17)

11 Professor Margaret O'Brien (FWP0044)

12 Q60 [Witness H] (Session 2017–19)

## Government policies to support fathers

6. A range of policies is now available to support working fathers: time off to attend antenatal appointments, statutory paternity leave and pay, shared parental leave and pay, the right to request flexible working, and unpaid parental leave and time off for dependants (emergency leave).<sup>13</sup>

7. The Government's intentions in putting these policies in place seem clear: it has consistently said that it wants fathers and mothers to share care for their children more equally, and has put particular focus on sharing responsibility for providing care in a child's first year.<sup>14</sup> In November 2017 the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, Margot James MP, told us that fathers doing less than half of the childcare tasks in the home places too great a burden on women. More positively, she said that "it is very important for family life that fathers get the chance to bond with their children, as mothers have always traditionally done".<sup>15</sup>

8. The Government also acknowledges that fathers taking greater responsibility for childcare, and thus enabling women to re-join the workplace, will ultimately contribute to reducing the gender pay gap.<sup>16</sup> This issue is therefore important not only for families, but for the economy. Our predecessor Committee's report on the gender pay gap in 2016 found that the unequal division of responsibility for childcare in the home is a major contributory factor to the gap.<sup>17</sup> Key recommendations included that all jobs should be available on flexible terms unless an employer could demonstrate an immediate and continuing business case against doing so, and that shared parental leave (SPL) should be made more effective by the introduction of an additional three months' paid paternal leave for 'second parents'.<sup>18</sup>

9. Although it did not accept these recommendations, the Government reiterated that shared parental leave and pay in particular were intended to bring about a cultural change in attitudes towards shared parenting.<sup>19</sup> It has committed to evaluating shared parental leave in 2018. In February 2018 the Government launched a publicity campaign aimed at promoting the benefits of SPL to parents and improving what is expected to be a disappointing level of take-up to date.

10. This is not the only area in which the Government appears to accept that some additional work is needed to make these policies effective in practice. A statutory evaluation of the right to request flexible working is due to take place in 2019, but the Prime Minister has already called for companies to make flexible working "a reality for all employees" by advertising all jobs as flexible from day one, unless there are solid business reasons not to.<sup>20</sup>

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13 While we have focused on workplace policies, we recognise that help with childcare costs and other benefits also play an important role in the support that fathers and their families receive.

14 Department for Business, Enterprise and Industrial Strategy ([FWP0054](#))

15 Q101 (Session 2017–19)

16 Q101 (Session 2017–19)

17 Women and Equalities Committee, Second Report of Session 2015–16, [Gender Pay Gap](#), HC 584

18 Women and Equalities Committee, Second Report of Session 2015–16, [Gender Pay Gap](#), HC 584

19 Women and Equalities Committee, Third Special Report of Session 2016–17, [Gender Pay Gap: Government Response to the Committee's Second Report of Session 2015–16](#), HC 963

20 Prime Minister's Office, 10 Downing Street, [Prime Minister announces new drive to end the gender pay gap](#), 28 October 2017

11. In this report, we examine the barriers to men's full participation in their children's lives and whether current workplace policies are sufficient to realise the full scale of the Government's ambitions in this regard. We look chronologically at the support a father needs in the workplace, from the early days of his partner's pregnancy and childbirth through to responsibility for childcare in early and later years. Before looking at each of the policies in turn, however, it is necessary to consider two factors that militate against the success of all of the policies: firstly, that many fathers do not have access to these provisions because of their employment status, and secondly, how culture and social norms present barriers to change.

## How employment status affects access to parental support

12. A father's employment status has a critical impact on his access to parental benefits; employed fathers can access the full range of benefits (if they meet the eligibility criteria), whereas fathers who are agency workers or in casualised jobs do not have access to the full range of entitlements. Fathers who are self-employed currently have no access to state support in the workplace for their childcare responsibilities.

13. Self-employment can bring flexibility for fathers who are dissatisfied with the support that employment provides for their childcare responsibilities. Several fathers told us that they had moved from employment to self-employment in order to downsize and spend more time with their family.<sup>21</sup> For fathers of disabled children, who are significantly less likely to feel they achieve satisfactory work-life balance,<sup>22</sup> self-employment may provide the control over working hours or the flexibility that they need to be available at short notice.<sup>23</sup>

14. The downside to self-employment, however, is the lack of state parental benefits. The same is mostly true of casual and agency workers. The CBI told us that disparities between the rights on offer to employees and agency or temporary workers were justified because there is a mutuality of obligation between employees and employers: "It is right that we offer a range of rights to our employees that is better than the range of rights companies are expected to offer someone who has come in for a week from an agency to cover someone being away on holiday."<sup>24</sup> The TUC, however, argued that, in reality, many people who are on zero-hours contracts and agency workers' contracts are effectively in permanent jobs, and that they need rights to help them spend time with their families.<sup>25</sup>

15. Harmonisation of entitlements for different groups of workers was addressed by the Taylor Review of Modern Employment Practices which reported in November 2017. The review concluded:

There are some differences in benefit entitlement but these are now relatively small—for example, the self-employed [ ... ] do not receive the same parental benefits. [ ... ] the Review considers that those working in this way should receive the same benefits from the state.<sup>26</sup>

21 Q14, Q90ff. [Witness H] (Session 2017–19) and Citizens Advice, [Who's the Boss? An exploration of the family lives of self-employed people](#), accessed March 2018, supports this

22 Trades Union Congress ([FWP0055](#))

23 Fatherhood Institute, [Cash or Carry? Fathers combining work and care in the UK](#), December 2017

24 Q75 [Neil Carberry] (Session 2016–17)

25 Q75 [Matthew Creagh] (Session 2016–17)

26 HM Government, [Good Work: A Response to the Taylor Review of Modern Working Practices](#), February 2018

16. The Government responded to the Taylor Review in February 2018, saying that it agreed with the principle of equalising benefits for the self-employed but that it would consider these changes once it has considered the wider context of tax, benefits and rights over the longer term.<sup>27</sup> The Review also recommended that all employees and workers should be given a written statement of rights on day one of their job and the Government accepted this recommendation, saying it was consulting on what information the statement should include.<sup>28</sup> The written statement that employers are currently entitled to within two months of starting a new job does not include parental benefits.<sup>29</sup>

**17. The Government has accepted the Taylor Review of Modern Working Practices' recommendation that all employees and workers should be given a written statement of rights on day one of their job and says it is consulting on what should be included. We ask the Government to ensure that this statement includes all parental benefits.**

18. Throughout this report, we have looked at how a father's employment status affects his access to workplace support chronologically as we consider each policy, rather than considering different forms of employment separately.

### Culture and social norms as a barrier to fathers sharing childcare

19. Even if access to parental benefits were universal, the extent to which fathers take up those benefits will be affected by cultural attitudes in workplaces and in society more widely. Government policy therefore has to overcome rigid social norms about gender roles which have a detrimental effect on the ability of fathers to access workplace support for their childcare responsibilities.<sup>30</sup> According to Dr Helen McCarthy and Dr Laura King, the ideal of a man working full-time to support his family is powerful and long embedded:

The male breadwinner ideal has proved remarkably resilient throughout the twentieth century[ ... ]. Any effort to challenge gendered attitudes in the present-day workplace must recognise the enduring and deeply entrenched nature of this ideal.<sup>31</sup>

20. Assumptions about who within a family is responsible for childcare can mean that fathers are 'embarrassed' to ask their employers for their entitlements, or fear the impact it could have on their career if they do.<sup>32</sup> Forty-four per cent of fathers responding to the Modern Families Index published in 2017 said they had lied or bent the truth to their employer about family-related responsibilities that might be seen as interfering with work.<sup>33</sup> Maternity Action argued that evidence of high levels of pregnancy and maternity discrimination indicate that fathers can have little confidence that their own rights as parents will be respected. It says that:

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27 HM Government, [Good Work: A Response to the Taylor Review of Modern Working Practices](#), February 2018

28 HM Government, [Good Work: A Response to the Taylor Review of Modern Working Practices](#), February 2018

29 Gov.uk, [Employment contracts](#), accessed March 2018

30 A member of the public ([FWP0025](#))

31 Mile End Institute & History and Policy Parenting Forum ([FWP0027](#))

32 Q46 (Session 2017–19)

33 [The Modern Families Index 2017](#)

In exercising rights to leave and flexible working, fathers risk job loss, demotion and negative comments. These are an effective deterrent to fathers considering changing their working arrangements to take on a greater share of caring responsibilities.<sup>34</sup>

21. Individual fathers who gave evidence to the inquiry told us about negative workplace cultures. One described coming up against a “macho culture” and concern about being seen as “soft”,<sup>35</sup> and Professor Tina Miller referred to qualitative studies which highlight the difficulty for fathers in a male-dominated environment to be the one to ask for leave.<sup>36</sup> Some sectors are less family-friendly than others. One father who worked in the music industry told us that it was his clients’ expectations that were the problem, rather than his employer: “a week into my paternity leave I had several clients calling me up asking me what I was doing and why I was taking time off”.<sup>37</sup>

22. Fathers told us that employers routinely assumed that their child’s primary carer was the mother, even where childcare responsibility was shared or where he was the primary carer. They talked about being mocked by co-workers for working part-time to accommodate childcare pick-ups, with colleagues saying “Bye, part-timer”, or “Are you working part-time again?” or “Oh, you’re off early again”.<sup>38</sup>

23. Fathers also told us that services such as schools, nurseries and healthcare services sometimes treated them as secondary, even where they were the primary carer, and young fathers in particular can feel marginalised by services.<sup>39</sup> Stereotypes about men and women’s parenting roles are widespread across different media<sup>40</sup> as well as product marketing.<sup>41</sup> One father told us: “I would say it is a cultural thing. We are in 2017 but we are not, as a nation, particularly progressive on this.”<sup>42</sup> Another father said, “In order for more men to [take on caring responsibilities], it needs a massive cultural shift. It is going to take generations before we get there, the way it is going.”<sup>43</sup>

24. Leave policies can influence the division of caring and domestic responsibilities between mothers and fathers over the longer term<sup>44</sup> and ultimately women’s participation and pay in the workplace.<sup>45</sup> Researchers and policy-makers have noted a range of potential benefits when fathers take on more childcare, including benefits for family stability, father-child relationships, child development and fathers’ health.<sup>46</sup>

25. It should be noted that policies considered by our inquiry are not just for fathers but for all ‘second parents’; we recognise the importance of inclusive policies. We acknowledge that language, such as the term ‘second parents’, can itself reinforce notions about which parent is the primary carer. Our focus has been on the experiences of fathers specifically

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34 Maternity Action ([FWP0057](#))

35 Q47 (Session 2017–19)

36 Q10 (Session 2016–17)

37 Q14 [Witness H] (Session 2017–19)

38 Q69 [Witness B] (Session 2017–19)

39 Q18 [Professor Tina Miller] (Session 2016–17); Barnado’s ([FWP0024](#))

40 Fatherhood Institute, [Cash or Carry? Fathers combining work and care in the UK](#), December 2017

41 Dad’s House Ashford ([FWP0030](#))

42 Q49 [Witness E] (Session 2017–19)

43 Q95 [Witness E] (Session 2017–19)

44 Dr Helen Norman, Professor Colette Fagan and Professor Mark Elliot ([FWP0028](#))

45 Working Families and Family Friendly Working Scotland ([FWP0037](#))

46 Q53 [Jo Swinson]; Fatherhood Institute, [Cash or Carry? Fathers combining work and care in the UK](#), December 2017 (Session 2016–17)

because gendered social norms about men's and women's roles are heavily implicated in the design, implementation and take-up of workplace policies. We believe that the effectiveness of workplace policies for other groups of parents, including same-sex parents, lone parents,<sup>47</sup> non-resident or part-time resident parents and adoptive parents, is worthy of specific attention which we have not been able to give in this inquiry.

## About this inquiry

26. Our predecessor Committee launched this inquiry in January 2017. A wide range of written submissions were received, many from individual fathers and mothers themselves, as well as from employer organisations, unions, researchers, think-tanks and NGOs and the Government. The Committee held two oral evidence sessions in the 2016–17 Session of Parliament to hear from expert witnesses.

27. Following the General Election in 2017, the newly-constituted Committee decided to continue work on the inquiry in the new Parliament. In November 2017 we held a roundtable in closed session to hear directly from fathers from different backgrounds and with different experiences about the support they had received in the workplace with their childcare responsibilities. Finally, we heard from the then Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, Margot James, and Mark Holmes, Deputy Director, Labour Market, Individual Rights in the same Department.

28. We are grateful to all who provided evidence on the important issues we have considered in this inquiry. We are also grateful for the advice and assistance of our specialist adviser, Adrienne Burgess.<sup>48</sup>

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47 Dad's House Ashford ([FWP0030](#))

48 Adrienne Burgess declared no interests.

## 2 Antenatal appointments

29. Antenatal appointments, including scans to identify any anomalies with the baby's growth, are a key service which provide important health information for expectant mothers. In October 2014, the Government introduced a new day-one right for employee fathers and partners to take unpaid time off work to attend up to two antenatal appointments. When introducing this, the Government said it was a "major step in the government's measures to encourage involvement of fathers with their children from the earliest possible stages."<sup>49</sup>

30. Fathers who are agency workers are required to have been doing the same kind of job for the same hirer for at least 12 weeks to be eligible for this right. In contrast, all mothers who are agency workers have a day-one right for unpaid time off to attend all antenatal appointments, and if they have worked for the same company for 12 weeks they are entitled to paid time off to attend such appointments.

31. The Government told us that:

it is important that fathers are involved from an early stage. Approximately two thirds of fathers took some time off work to attend antenatal appointments before their child was born. Fathers were most likely to do so if they were part of a dual earner family or had a higher annual household income.<sup>50</sup>

This suggests that less well-off fathers are less likely to take up this right and that if the time off were paid rather than unpaid, that could make a difference.

32. We heard that lack of awareness of the policy and obstructive employers can also be barriers to fathers taking up this entitlement. One father told us he had not been aware of his entitlement to attend antenatal appointments, and had instead taken annual leave in order to attend. Other fathers told us they knew of work colleagues who had been refused time off to attend antenatal appointments.<sup>51</sup>

33. A father of twins told us that the restriction of the policy to fathers attending two antenatal appointments could pose difficulties in the case of multiple births because of the additional appointments needed: "My first challenge with twins is that you have additional antenatal appointments to go to [ ... ]. In the worst case this can be every two or four weeks until they are born."<sup>52</sup>

**34. There is a statutory right to time off for ante-natal appointments but some employers may be putting hurdles in the way of fathers exercising this right. Fathers should not be prevented from attending appointments because they cannot afford to do so, are not aware that they have this right or because their employer does not allow them to.**

49 Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, [New rights for fathers and partners to attend antenatal appointments](#), 2 October 2014

50 Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy ([FWP0054](#))

51 Q85-86 (Session 2017-19)

52 A member of the public ([FWP0004](#))

***35. Fathers who are employees should be entitled to paid time off to attend antenatal appointments as a day-one right. Agency worker fathers should be entitled to unpaid time off to attend antenatal appointments as a day-one right, and to paid time off to attend antenatal appointments once they have been with the same company for 12 weeks. The Government should consider whether the entitlement to attend two appointments is sufficiently supportive for parents of multiple babies or where other factors mean additional appointments are required.***



### 3 Paternity leave and pay

36. Paternity leave is the most widely-known and well-understood workplace policy for fathers.<sup>53</sup> Its purpose is to allow the father to spend time with his partner and new baby around the time of the birth. In 2003, paid paternity leave was introduced in the UK for the first time, allowing eligible fathers—those who have been continuously employed for 26 weeks by the end of the 15th week before the expected week of childbirth— to take 10 days' leave at or around the time of the child's birth or adoption. Paternity pay of up to two weeks is currently paid at £140.98 per week or 90 per cent of weekly earnings, whichever is lower. Some fathers who are workers ('employed earners') are eligible for paternity pay, but self-employed fathers do not have access to any form of state paternity support.

37. Maternity leave is, by contrast, a day-one right in a new job for employed mothers-to-be, and is available for up to 52 weeks. Employed mothers and some agency workers can access maternity pay which is subject to eligibility criteria and a qualifying period. This is paid for six weeks at 90 per cent of weekly earnings, and subsequently at £140.98 or 90 per cent of weekly earnings, whichever is lower, for 33 weeks. Some self-employed and low-paid mothers are eligible for a maternity allowance, as are some agency worker mothers if they are not entitled to maternity pay.

#### Are the Government's policies on paternity leave and pay effective?

38. Paternity leave is clearly appreciated by those who are able to make use of it. One father told us of the benefits of paternity leave for his relationship with his child and for his partner's career:

This paternity leave was very valuable and useful because my partner wanted to go back to work as she's a retail manager and sales had fallen whilst she was out of the business on maternity and I love spending time with the children as I obviously haven't got the bond a mother has from physically giving birth.<sup>54</sup>

A survey in 2009 found that over half (56 per cent) of British fathers who took paternity leave believed this was directly responsible for their greater involvement in the care of their children in the longer term; and 69 per cent said it led to improvements in the quality of family life.<sup>55</sup>

#### Levels of take-up

39. It is not known, however, how many fathers are benefiting from this entitlement. The Government does not hold accurate data on the levels of take-up of paternity leave and pay because pay levels are so low and leave is so short that many employers do not seek reimbursement from the Government.<sup>56</sup> The need for evidence was stressed by witnesses. The Government told us that it plans to commission the next edition of the Maternity and Paternity Rights Survey which has been conducted at intervals since the 1970s, during

53 Fatherhood Institute, [Cash or Carry? Fathers combining work and care in the UK](#), December 2017

54 A member of the public (FWP0017)

55 Fatherhood Institute, [Cash or Carry? Fathers combining work and care in the UK](#), December 2017

56 Fatherhood Institute, [Cash or Carry? Fathers combining work and care in the UK](#), December 2017

2018. This will involve parents with young children being interviewed to monitor the take-up of maternity and paternity benefits.<sup>57</sup> The Government has also said that it plans to develop an employer survey.

40. Some information about take-up is provided by research by Professor Margaret O'Brien and others published in 2015. This research found that 91 per cent of UK fathers took time off around the time of their baby's birth. Of those taking time off, 49 per cent took statutory paternity leave only, 25 per cent took statutory leave plus other paid leave, 18 per cent took other paid leave only, and five per cent took unpaid leave. Those taking statutory paternity leave were most likely to take the full statutory two weeks (50 per cent).<sup>58</sup>

### *Eligibility criteria*

41. TUC analysis of the Labour Force Survey found that more than one in four men who became fathers in 2016 (over 157,000 new fathers) did not qualify for paternity leave or pay. 44,000 of these were ineligible because they had not been working for their employer for long enough. We heard arguments that the qualifying period should be removed; Neil Carberry of the CBI, for example, told us that "it does seem odd or at least in question to me why a statutory maternity leave is a day-one right but a statutory paternity leave and access to shared parental leave is not."<sup>59</sup>

42. The Government told us that the justification for statutory paternity leave not being a day-one right, in contrast to maternity leave, is because of the different physiological effects of childbirth on women, including physical recovery from the birth and a choice whether to breastfeed. The Minister said she could understand how this could seem "quite unfair" on new fathers.<sup>60</sup> Mark Holmes, Deputy Director of Labour Market and Individual Rights in the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, added that there is a need to balance the benefit to the employee with the uncertainty caused to the employer. The Minister undertook to look further at this issue.<sup>61</sup>

43. The TUC also told us, in relation to paternity leave as well as other rights, that one of their key concerns is that fathers who find themselves in precarious employment, such as agency work, zero-hours contracts or casual hours contracts, have no access to these employment rights that would enable them to spend more time with their families.<sup>62</sup> A number of organisations called for the introduction of a paternity allowance, similar to maternity allowance, for self-employed fathers, because they may not be able to take leave at all when their child is born. The Fawcett Society called this a "loophole" which needed closing.<sup>63</sup>

**44. Paternity leave and pay have the potential to meet the Government's objective of supporting fathers to be at home around the time of their child's birth, but they need updating to meet the needs of the modern family in a changing workforce.**

57 Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy ([FWP0001](#))

58 Professor Margaret O'Brien ([FWP0044](#))

59 Q78 [Neil Carberry] (Session 2016–17)

60 Q118 (Session 2017–19)

61 Q121 (Session 2017–19)

62 Q48 [Matthew Creagh] (Session 2016–17)

63 Fawcett Society ([FWP0053](#))

45. We recognise the different policy objectives of maternity leave and paternity leave, but we are not convinced that this should mean that expectant fathers should not have a day-one entitlement to paternity leave in a new job. The current qualifying criteria risk reinforcing a message that parenting is a less important role for fathers than for mothers. Nor do we believe that fathers who are agency workers or who are self-employed should be left without access to financial support at the time of the birth of their children.

*46. Fathers who are employees should be eligible for two weeks' paternity leave as a day-one right, similar to maternity leave. Fathers who are agency workers should be eligible for paternity pay with the same eligibility requirements as agency worker mothers have for maternity pay. Self-employed fathers should be eligible for a Paternity Allowance, similar to Maternity Allowance.*

### **Level of pay**

47. We heard evidence that the low level of statutory paternity pay is a barrier to some fathers taking time off work to be at home when their child is born. Low-income fathers are half as likely as better-paid fathers to take statutory paternity leave and are also far less likely to receive wage top-ups from their employer.<sup>64</sup> There are sectoral differences too: for example, a 2013 survey of employers found that 41 per cent of employers in the manufacturing sector experienced fathers taking annual leave instead of statutory paternity leave, while only seven per cent of employers in the public administration and defence sector reported the same.<sup>65</sup>

48. The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) told us about its research with employers which found that around half (49 per cent) provide only the statutory minimum amount of paternity pay, while almost one in five (18 per cent) pay at or near the full rate of pay for paternity leave. Public and voluntary sector organisations are more likely than those in the private sector to enhance paternity pay provision, with 29 per cent of public sector and 26 per cent of voluntary sector organisations paying two weeks' enhanced paternity pay at or near the full rate of pay, compared to 15 per cent of private sector organisations.<sup>66</sup> Referring to differences in pay rates and length of leave between maternity and paternity leave, the Men and Boys Coalition said that:

The fact that there is both a difference in the time periods and rates of entitlement already acts as a structural barrier regarding fatherhood and the workplace. In effect, it acts as a clear push factor or disincentive for working men to be involved as fathers in the very first weeks of their child's birth.<sup>67</sup>

64 Fatherhood Institute, [Cash or Carry? Fathers combining work and care in the UK](#), December 2017

65 Fatherhood Institute, [Cash or Carry? Fathers combining work and care in the UK](#), December 2017

66 CIPD ([FWP0038](#))

67 Men and Boys Coalition ([FWP0042](#))

49. The effect of the policy as currently structured is to enable better-off fathers to benefit more; we do not believe that the Government intends to target its paternity policies in this way. We do, however, recognise that ongoing inequalities in pay mean that men (who are the overwhelming majority of second parents) have significantly higher incomes than women on average. It is reasonable, therefore, for paternity pay to be capped for higher earners to limit the cost to the public purse.

50. **We do not believe that the Government’s objective of supporting fathers to share care can be met if paternity pay is so low that better-off fathers are more able to take time off at the start of their child’s life. This militates against the Government’s aim that fathers should be able to have time with their new child. We reiterate the recommendation of our predecessor Committee in its report on the gender pay gap that two weeks’ paternity leave should be paid at 90 per cent of earnings (capped), similar to maternity pay which is paid for six weeks at 90 per cent (uncapped).**

### **Length of paternity leave**

51. Fathers often extend their paternity leave by taking unpaid leave or annual leave. One father told us: “For all three of my children, I have had to take two weeks’ holiday afterwards, obviously, because [ ... ] giving birth to a child is not the easiest thing so you need to support your wife afterwards.”<sup>68</sup> Not all fathers, however, can afford to do this or are permitted to do so by their employer.

52. Limiting the statutory period to two weeks is, some argued, particularly inadequate in certain specific circumstances, such as where the mother or baby is ill or has been born prematurely. One father told us:

When my partner had our daughter, after three days she had to go back into hospital. She got an infection, so she was in for five days. I seemed to not have any bonding time at the start with the baby. I spoke to my company about it and they were not interested. All they wanted to know was, ‘How soon are you coming back?’<sup>69</sup>

53. We received evidence from Bliss that over 90,000 babies are born in the UK every year who need specialist neonatal care over periods which can vary from days to months. If a baby remains in hospital for the full two weeks of paternity leave this leaves no time for the father to bond with the baby or support his partner in the home environment. In a survey on parental leave conducted by Bliss in 2013, almost 70 per cent of fathers reported having to return to work while their baby was still on the neonatal unit, with nearly a further 10 per cent being signed off sick or taking unpaid leave while their baby was in hospital.<sup>70</sup>

54. There are similar challenges for fathers of multiple babies. A father of twins told us:

After the birth, my wife needed to stay in hospital for five days due to health issues with the boys. [ ... ] This means that with an unsupportive employer, the father of multiples inevitably has an awful dilemma: to either use up paternity leave while the children are in hospital—meaning he is potentially

68 Q16 [Witness G] (Session 2017–19)

69 Q26 [Witness F] (Session 2017–19)

70 Bliss ([FWP0062](#))

unavailable to help once they come home—or to leave the mother and children alone in hospital while he works, and to ‘save’ paternity leave for when the family return home. Neither of these is appealing: the employer ends up with a distracted and/or exhausted father, the father ends up in a highly stressful situation, and the mother has to cope without the support of the father.<sup>71</sup>

55. When asked about the length of paternity leave in cases of multiple births, where the baby is born prematurely or where the mother has to spend a long period in hospital, the Minister said that in some cases “I quite agree that it must seem inadequate—certainly after multiple births, and also the issue of babies being born very prematurely.”<sup>72</sup>

56. ***We recommend that the new edition of the Maternity and Paternity Rights Survey should gather evidence about:***

- ***the effectiveness and take-up of paternity leave and pay, including the length of paternity leave in cases of multiple births or where the mother or baby is in hospital for an extended period of time; and***
- ***the extent to which employers top up these benefits or have their own parental leave policies.***

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71 A member of the public ([FWP0004](#))

72 Q109 (Session 2017–19)

## 4 Shared parental leave and pay

57. The Government’s flagship policy on shared parental leave was introduced in April 2015. It was intended to send “a clear message that responsibility for providing care in a child’s first year should be shared.”<sup>73</sup> Under this policy, if a mother ends her maternity leave early, up to 50 weeks, the couple can then share whatever leave remains. Parents can take shared parental leave at the same time, or the father (or the mother) can take the rest of the leave individually. Shared parental pay is currently paid at £140.98 or 90 per cent of weekly earnings (whichever is lower) for a maximum of 37 weeks. The parent taking shared parental leave must have worked for the same employer for 26 weeks by the end of the 15th week before the baby is due.

### Are the Government’s policies on shared parental leave and pay effective?

58. The Minister told us that the Government will be undertaking an evaluation of shared parental leave in 2018:

The purpose of doing the evaluation is to find out what is going on, what sort of men are asking for [shared parental leave] and using it, what sort of employers are doing it, whether there is any correlation in the types of employers that are granting it, and the barriers that fathers face. All of those things will be evaluated, as well as the actual numbers on the take-up. Depending on what we find out, we will make some judgements about the policy implications.<sup>74</sup>

59. Those fathers who have been able to take up shared parental leave have some very positive stories to tell.<sup>75</sup> One father told us that, once his wife ended her maternity leave at nine months, he took the remaining three months unpaid. He said he was lucky that he and his wife were able to use savings to pay the bills for those three months and it was an opportunity that he did not want to turn down. He told us; “I feel very grateful that I have been able to have that time.”<sup>76</sup>

60. There is also potential for fathers’ leave to have a significant influence on families, not just at the time, but in future years as well.<sup>77</sup> The Government told us that international evidence is mixed about whether the amount of caring fathers do in the first year of the child’s life is particularly influential on how parents divide their roles and responsibilities over the long term.<sup>78</sup> However, experts on fathers and work were less equivocal. Dr Helen Norman, Professor Colette Fagan and Professor Mark Elliot told us that “the work and care arrangements established in the first year of parenthood set up a pattern of care-giving that persists two years later.”<sup>79</sup> According to Professor Margaret O’Brien, fathering alone for a significant period is hugely influential in terms of subsequent family roles: “Fathers become more independent caregivers and are more responsible for housework

73 Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy ([FWP0054](#))

74 Q139 (Session 2017–19)

75 See Working Families case study [videos](#)

76 Q12 [Witness E] (Session 2017–19)

77 Business in the Community ([FWP0059](#))

78 Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy ([FWP0054](#))

79 Dr Helen Norman, Professor Colette Fagan and Professor Mark Elliot ([FWP0028](#))

if they parent solo for some time.” She says that when fathers take only a couple of weeks off around the birth, the division of tasks in the home over subsequent years continues to follow a more traditional, gendered model. In contrast, when a father spends a longer period caring solo for very young children he has a closer relationship with them in the longer term and takes on more responsibility for domestic tasks as well. Professor O’Brien concludes that “this chunk of solo caring by the father seems to be a tipping point, offering considerable potential for greater gender equality in the home.”<sup>80</sup>

61. Working Families and Family Friendly Working Scotland agree with this conclusion and argue that when fathers take parental leave and undertake more childcare, mothers are more likely to advance in their careers.<sup>81</sup> The Fatherhood Institute puts it this way:

if the father does not play a substantial care-taking role early on, he may never do so. Nor is it useful for father and mother to take leave together: it is usually after fathers have cared for their children solo for extended periods that gender roles are transformed.<sup>82</sup>

### **Low levels of take-up**

62. These effects will necessarily be limited, however, if only a few fathers are able to take advantage of shared parental leave. Estimates made by the Government at the time of the introduction of shared parental leave suggested that take-up by eligible fathers would only be between two and eight per cent.<sup>83</sup> When we took evidence from the Minister for this inquiry, we asked for recent figures for shared parental leave; she told us that take-up remained “disappointing [ ... ] under 10 per cent”. We pressed the Minister on the level of take-up the Government would like to see. She responded, “I would regard 25 per cent as successful. I would regard anything over 20 per cent as very encouraging. We are not going to see those figures, so [the level of take-up] is going to demonstrate that we have a lot more to do.”<sup>84</sup>

### **Complexity of the process**

63. We heard concerns that take-up of shared parental leave is suppressed because it is “administratively cumbersome”.<sup>85</sup> The CIPD found that more than seven in ten employers thought shared parental leave was complicated or very complicated<sup>86</sup> and Dr Emma Banister and Dr Ben Kerrane said; “Smaller employers are unlikely, we suggest, to have the resources to be able to assist fully with unpacking the complexity of the policy with their employees.”<sup>87</sup>

64. We heard that the process for applying for shared parental leave hinders take-up by parents. The NASUWT described it as “bureaucratic” in terms of the notification required and the way in which periods of leave are booked as either ‘continuous leave’ or

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80 Professor Margaret O’Brien, [“Home alone” parental leave for dads transforms fatherhood](#), March 2017

81 Working Families and Family Friendly Working ([FWP0037](#))

82 Fatherhood Institute, [Cash or Carry? Fathers combining work and care in the UK](#), December 2017

83 Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy ([FWP0054](#))

84 Q138 (Session 2017–19)

85 Professor Margaret O’Brien ([FWP0044](#))

86 Q80 [Jo Swinson] (Session 2017–19)

87 Dr Emma Bannister and Dr Ben Kerrane ([FWP0039](#))

‘discontinuous leave’. NASUWT also highlighted the problem for parents that, once leave has been booked, the employer can refuse a period of ‘discontinuous leave’ and the onus then reverts back to the employee to either withdraw the request or modify it.<sup>88</sup>

### *Design of shared parental leave*

65. We heard wide criticisms about the design of shared parental leave and the impact this has on take-up rates. Any leave that is taken by a father under this policy reduces the amount of leave that the mother is able to take; this type of design is known as ‘maternal transfer’.<sup>89</sup> Many fathers are reluctant to take leave that they feel belongs to their partner. This was the experience of one father we spoke to who said:

If hypothetically it was six weeks, two months or anything that was for me that did not detract from my wife’s leave, then I would have had it in a heartbeat and she would probably have been happy for me to do that, but because it took away [from her leave], that was not an option.<sup>90</sup>

A mother told us she wanted there to be “dedicated daddy time after birth that doesn’t affect the mother’s entitlement.”<sup>91</sup>

66. Duncan Fisher described shared parental leave as “terrible”, because of the way that leave is transferred from the mother:

all the leave is given to the mother, and she then gives it to the guy if she wants to. That communicates a really unfortunate message, which is a foundation of gender inequality in our society. It says that the caring is the mother’s role.<sup>92</sup>

67. Professor Tina Miller built on this theme: “mothers and fathers do not make choices about who takes leave on a level playing field; it is gendered, and it is historically unequal.” She believes that making parental leave a dedicated right for fathers is essential to its effectiveness as a tool for promoting sharing of care. She argued that:

if we are really serious [about fathers sharing care], we have to say, ‘This is fathers’ leave.’ Men will benefit in all sorts of ways from that, and many men want that. It does make it possible for the fathers who have not realised they want it or find it difficult to try to ask and request that.<sup>93</sup>

68. Neil Carberry of the CBI told us that businesses would not feel there was a problem with reserving parts of the leave for fathers, but that businesses “would be concerned if we were moving into a period where the shared parental leave period extended.”<sup>94</sup>

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88 NASUWT ([FWP0020](#))

89 Professor Margaret O’Brien ([FWP0044](#))

90 Q73 [Witness A] (Session 2017–19)

91 A member of the public ([FWP0005](#))

92 Q21 [Duncan Fisher] (Session 2016–17)

93 Q10 [Professor Tina Miller] (Session 2016–17)

94 Q97 [Neil Carberry] (Session 2016–17)



### *Low levels of awareness of shared parental leave*

69. Levels of awareness about shared parental leave remain low.<sup>95</sup> One father reported that he was the first dad in an organisation of 4,000 to have taken it:

The person in HR was a bit like, ‘I do not know what to do here’, because it was new. I found that a bit shocking because it is something that has been going for two years. I do not think there is a lot of knowledge about it [among] the general public.<sup>96</sup>

The Government estimates that only around half of the public are aware of this option for parents. In order to improve awareness, the Government launched a publicity campaign about shared parental leave in February 2018.<sup>97</sup>

### *Low rate of shared parental pay*

70. For some fathers, the main barrier to taking up shared parental leave is financial. The gender pay gap between mothers and fathers is far wider than that between all women and all men; in couple families with at least one working parent, only one mother in five (22 per cent) brings home even half the family income, and this figure rises to around one third in households in which both parents are in paid work.<sup>98</sup> One father told us that these financial issues were critical to decision-making about shared parental leave; “Shared parental leave appeared pointless to us (and probably most relationships) post-birth because I’m the breadwinner and it makes no financial sense, as we struggle financially already.”<sup>99</sup> Where a mother’s employer offers enhanced maternity pay, there will be an additional disincentive for her to lose this by ending maternity leave and the father taking up shared parental leave paid at a lower rate.

71. We recognise the barrier that the low shared parental pay rate presents to fathers taking up their entitlement. However, the evidence we have received about the design and take-up of shared parental leave and how parental leave policies work in other countries does not lead us to conclude that enhancing pay would on its own create the cultural or behavioural change necessary to meet the Government’s objectives. Maternity Action told us that, in order to have an impact on gender equality, significant numbers of fathers need to take extended periods of leave; they warned against policies that allocate new funds but that make only minor changes to fathers’ leave-taking and have minimal impact on workplace culture.<sup>100</sup>

72. Duncan Fisher of The Family Initiative was one of the experts consulted by the Government when it was developing the shared parental leave policy. He told us that it was clear at the time that it would not “tick the boxes that we know need to be ticked for leave systems to work.” He described these three boxes as: leave that is reserved only for fathers, sufficient pay to make it worthwhile for earning parents, and promoting cultural change through advertising campaigns and other initiatives.<sup>101</sup>

95 How Do You Do It Pty Ltd (FWP0023)

96 Q36 [Witness E] (Session 2017–19)

97 Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, [New ‘Share the joy’ campaign promotes shared parental leave rights for parents](#), 12 February 2018

98 Fatherhood Institute, [Cash or Carry? Fathers combining work and care in the UK](#), December 2017

99 A member of the public (FWP0013)

100 Maternity Action (FWP0057)

101 Q21 [Duncan Fisher] (Session 2016–17)

## International experiences of dedicated fathers' leave

73. We recognise that each country has its own particular culture and that fathers' leave policies interact with numerous other domestic policies, so comparisons can be difficult. Nonetheless, international experiences of parental leave policies suggest that fathers' individual right to a significant period of well-paid leave is key to their take-up rates and to fuller participation in their childcare and other domestic responsibilities.<sup>102</sup> Sweden was the first country to grant fathers and mothers equal access to paid leave in 1974. Few men took parental leave in practice, however, until a non-transferable one-month paid father's quota was introduced in 1995; when this happened, the take-up rate increased from nine per cent to 47 per cent of fathers over a period of eight years.<sup>103</sup>

74. The Fawcett Society and Fathers Network Scotland were among a number of organisations which pointed to Iceland as having a particularly effective model of standalone leave for fathers.<sup>104</sup> Fathers Network Scotland said that, as in Sweden, the introduction of dedicated "daddy leave" in Iceland saw take-up rates soar from minimal when it was shared parental leave to almost universal. Fathers Network Scotland acknowledged that women may resent losing a portion of their maternity leave to fathers, but argued that the "use-it-or-lose-it system" had produced benefits for gender equality more widely.<sup>105</sup>

## Costing leave policies for fathers

75. Changes to the level of pay to which fathers are entitled under paternity or shared parental leave policies would, of course, have cost implications. In its response to our predecessor Committee's recommendations in its report on the gender pay gap report for a new parental leave policy (in addition to existing policies) and an increase in paternity pay, the Government accepted that increasing pay for fathers could help close the pay gap if it encouraged more fathers to take time off work to fulfil childcare responsibilities and thereby enable mothers who want to return to work early to do so. The Government also said, however, that there was insufficient evidence to justify the high costs to the taxpayer of such a change in policy.<sup>106</sup>

76. During this inquiry, the Government told us that it had produced very broad estimates of the cost of our predecessor Committee's recommendation for additional leave for fathers at four weeks at 90 per cent of earnings and then a further eight weeks at the statutory pay rate. Mark Holmes of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy told us that, while the amount would depend very much on take-up and "a number of other factors", the cost to the Exchequer had been estimated "in the high hundreds of millions per year", and that the cost to business would be "in the low hundreds of millions per year". The Government told us that, from the experience of other countries, it would take a long time to close the gender pay gap so there would be no immediate benefit to the Treasury in terms of greater labour market participation and higher wages for women.<sup>107</sup>

102 Fatherhood Institute, [FI Research Summary: Paternity Leave](#), 7 November 2014

103 Lidia Farre, [Parental Leave Policies and Gender Equality: A Survey of the Literature](#), *Estudios de Economics Aplicada*, vol 34-1, pp45-60

104 Fawcett Society ([FWP0053](#)); Fathers Network Scotland ([FWP0033](#))

105 Fathers Network Scotland ([FWP0033](#))

106 Women and Equalities Committee, Third Special Report of Session 2016–17, [Gender Pay Gap: Government Response to the Committee's Second Report of Session 2015–16](#), HC 963

107 Q129 [Mark Holmes] (Session 2017–19)

The status quo is not an option, however, not least because employers such as Aviva<sup>108</sup> and others<sup>109</sup> which are offering enhanced benefits to fathers are creating a new norm. This means that employers will need to increase their offer to employees to stay competitive to good quality candidates.

## Conclusions and recommendation

77. The introduction of shared parental leave in 2015 represented a milestone in the development of workplace policies to support fathers to share their children's care in the crucial first year. In its report on the gender pay gap, our predecessor Committee recommended the introduction of three months' paid paternal leave for fathers and second parents, additional to existing parental benefits.

78. After receiving a large amount of evidence about how to meet government objectives on fathers sharing childcare, including from many fathers themselves, we believe that now is the time to take the next bold step in developing policies that will create real change in the lives of fathers and mothers. Incremental changes to the key policy expected to drive change will not meet the needs of younger generations of parents in particular.

79. It is clear to us that the current policies of shared parental leave and pay are driven by the best of intentions. A father can take up to 50 weeks of shared parental leave and 37 weeks of shared parental pay, meaning that he could be his child's primary carer in the first year if the family chooses. For individual couples who have this choice, this could be a very welcome opportunity. However, the Government estimated that only a very small proportion of fathers will take up shared parental leave, and the proportion of fathers it allows to become the primary carer is likely to be even smaller.

80. The maternal transfer design of the current policy of shared parental leave and the low rate of pay militate against fathers, likely to be the higher earner, taking it up in significant numbers. The policy reinforces rather than challenges traditional gender roles and therefore undermines government objectives on fathers sharing care and mothers being supported back into the workplace if they wish. Furthermore, deep-rooted social norms about gender roles mean that, where couples take leave at the same time, as the current policy allows, it will be all too easy for the mother to be the primary carer and the father to be the 'helper', and will not have the desired impact on gender roles in the home.

81. The way leave policies are designed is not just about enabling parents to take up entitlements: for better or worse it influences gender roles within families.

**82. The Government's objective is for mothers and fathers to share the task of caring for their children more equally. The current shared parental leave policy will not achieve this on a large scale, as the Government's own estimates of take-up show. The review of shared parental leave in 2018 presents an opportunity to look at ways of improving the policy, but also to consider alternative models which would better meet the Government's objectives. The evidence we have received indicates that a dedicated period of leave for fathers could create change on the scale the Government wants in the longer term.**

108 [Aviva announces equal paid parental leave](#) Accessed 8 March 2018

109 Deloitte ([FWP0046](#)), British Land ([FWP0060](#))

83. *We recommend that, as part of its review of shared parental leave in 2018, the Government undertake an analysis of the costs and benefits of an alternative policy of 12 weeks paternal leave and pay to replace shared parental leave. This should include the following elements:*

- *Fathers and second parents would be eligible for this leave in their own right; it would not affect mothers' existing entitlements to maternity leave and pay;*
- *The period of paternal leave would only be available to fathers in the first year after the child's birth;*
- *It would be available both to employees and to agency workers; and*
- *It would be paid at 90 per cent of salary for of the first four weeks (with a cap for higher earners), and the remaining eight weeks paid at statutory levels.*

84. *We acknowledge that the initial costs of implementing such a policy would be considerable. The Government's analysis should separate out the costs of each of the features we have outlined, and set out how variable take-up and imposing caps on pay at different levels would affect these costs. There would, however, also be potential for significant gains to the public purse in the long term, and we ask the Government to set out and take into account a comprehensive list of these factors in its costing. Among the likely benefits would be:*

- *The saving on maternity pay accrued from mothers if they return to work early;*
- *The likelihood of mothers remaining in the workforce in the longer term, due to fathers' greater responsibilities for childcare and the implications for their contribution to taxation throughout their careers;*
- *Mothers' longer term financial security, decreased likelihood of poverty in older age and a better pension; and*
- *Wider societal benefits including for children's health and development.*

85. We accept that the alternative policy we have outlined would not, on its own, replicate the current option of fathers being the primary carer in the child's first year, but we have seen no evidence that any but a very small proportion of families would be able to or choose to do this under shared parental leave as currently designed. For most families, this is an offer on paper only. Instead, our suggested alternative policy could offer a much larger proportion of fathers the option of taking a significant period of leave in the child's first year which could have a far wider impact on fathers' caring and domestic responsibilities, on mothers' participation in the workplace and on longer-term cultural change.

## 5 The right to request flexible working

86. Since 2014, all employees who have worked for the same employer for at least 26 weeks have had the legal right to request flexible working. The Government states that this request must be dealt with by employers in a ‘reasonable manner’.<sup>110</sup> This right has been gradually extended from the original policy, introduced in 2003, when it was only for parents of children under the age of six and disabled children up to the age of 17. The Government told us that the extension of the right to request flexible working “sends a clear signal that the Government supports individuals trying to balance work with commitments at home.”<sup>111</sup>

87. Flexible working arrangements can help parents to combine work with childcare. Part-time working in particular is strongly associated with having childcare responsibilities, but flexible working covers a broader range of arrangements including home-working, term-time working, job-sharing and compressed hours.<sup>112</sup> Evidence shows that fathers’ access to flexible working has a range of benefits and is associated with more satisfaction with their work-life balance.<sup>113</sup>

88. Our predecessor Committee’s report on the gender pay gap recommended that all jobs should be available to work flexibly unless an employer could demonstrate an immediate and continuing business case against doing so.<sup>114</sup> We therefore welcome the Prime Minister’s call in October 2017 for companies to make flexible working a reality for all employees by advertising all jobs as flexible from day one, unless there are solid business reasons not to.<sup>115</sup>

### Is the Government’s policy on the right to request flexible working effective?

89. The Government told us that it would be reviewing the right to request flexible working in 2019, and responding to the assessment in 2020 or 2021. The review will be informed by a “robust representative survey” to show levels of take-up, which the Government said it planned to be fully disaggregated by sex, parental status, age and socioeconomic status, so the full picture can be understood.<sup>116</sup>

90. While this survey promises to give the most complete picture yet available, evidence already exists about the extent to which fathers feel they have access to flexible working arrangements. The Minister told us that the Prime Minister’s announcement “definitely indicates that we feel that we have not got to a point where enough employment that can be flexible is flexible.”<sup>117</sup> The Government told us that women with dependants are over

110 Gov.uk, [Flexible working](#), accessed March 2018

111 Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy ([FWP0054](#))

112 See [Timewise](#) website on flexible working

113 Fatherhood Institute, [Cash or Carry? Fathers combining work and care in the UK](#), December 2017

114 Women and Equalities Committee, Second Report of Session 2015–16, [Gender Pay Gap](#), HC 584

115 Prime Minister’s Office, 10 Downing Street, [Prime Minister announces new drive to end the gender pay gap](#), 28 October 2017

116 Q147 [Mark Holmes] (Session 2017–19)

117 Q144 [Margot James] (Session 2017–19)

three-and-a-half times as likely to report working part-time as men with dependants,<sup>118</sup> although The Resolution Foundation reports a significant increase in the number of lower-paid male employees working part-time.<sup>119</sup>

91. The Government told us that the extension of the right to request flexible working in 2014 had played an important part in changing workplace culture.<sup>120</sup> However, men are less likely to make a request and are more likely than women to have their request rejected when they do.<sup>121</sup> We received evidence that there is still a powerful ‘flexibility stigma’: the stigma workers face when working flexibly and so deviating from the model of the ‘ideal worker’ who works perpetually and without outside obligations. Furthermore, men may experience an additional ‘femininity stigma’ because flexible working deviates from the image of a masculine worker being a provider rather than a carer.<sup>122</sup> The NASUWT told us that the policy on flexible working should have enabled greater gender equality in both the workplace and at home, but that it has failed to deliver, particularly for teachers.<sup>123</sup>

92. One father who works in the transport sector told us that a requirement for all jobs to be advertised as flexible would help fathers to manage their work with their childcare responsibilities by reforming expectations. He said that such a requirement “would make a difference to me and to everyone in our industry. There are a lot of people that want flexible working hours, because they are juggling childcare, but they cannot get it. You apply for it, you go through all the channels and then you get refused.”<sup>124</sup>

93. Mothers who work flexibly often tend to be side-lined or downgraded at work.<sup>125</sup> We heard evidence, however, that fathers are even more likely than mothers to perceive that they will be viewed negatively by employers if they request to work flexibly.<sup>126</sup> Unfortunately, this perception is borne out in reality according to research by Jasmine Kelland on fathers who want to work part-time, many of whom report negative judgements and suspicion at the point of recruitment. Comments by managers included: “I just think - lazy b\*\*\*\*\*d” and “I just wonder why he is applying for the job part time ... I wonder why?”<sup>127</sup> One father told us; “Having personally requested flexible working hours to spend more time with my son, I have found that it is awkward, frowned upon and not worth taking an attritional route to force my request through.”<sup>128</sup> Another father whose wife was on sick leave for work-related stress after maternity leave said that he knew he would be seen by his employer as not dedicated if he requested flexible working to look after his two young children; “My request would be denied and I would be seen as unprofessional, probably nixing my chances of gaining a potential future promotion, which I desperately want.”<sup>129</sup>

118 Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy ([FWP0054](#))

119 Stephen Clarke and George Bangham, [Counting the hours: two decades of changes in earnings and hours worked](#), Resolution Foundation, January 2018

120 Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy ([FWP0054](#))

121 Dr Helen Norman, Professor Colette Fagan and Professor Mark Elliot ([FWP0028](#)). It may be that fathers’ flexible working is more ‘under the radar’ than mothers’, that is, it takes place on an ad hoc basis without formal arrangements being put in place Fatherhood Institute, [-Cash or Carry? Fathers combining work and care in the UK](#), December 2017

122 Dr Heejung Chung ([FWP0048](#))

123 NASUWT ([FWP0020](#))

124 Q80 [Witness F] (Session 2017–19)

125 [Modern Families Index 2017](#)

126 Working Families and Family Friendly Working Scotland ([FWP0037](#))

127 Mrs Jasmine Kelland ([FWP0021](#))

128 A member of the public ([FWP0012](#))

129 A member of the public ([FWP0015](#))

94. While 96 per cent of employers say they offer some kind of flexible working, research by the Timewise Foundation has found that only 9.8 per cent of quality job vacancies, that is, jobs paying over £20,000 full-time equivalent, are advertised as being open to some kind of flexibility.<sup>130</sup>

95. Flexible working can be particularly valuable for parents of disabled children, but the difficulty such parents currently experience in finding flexible arrangements can reinforce traditional roles and reduce fathers' involvement in childcare. Working Families and Family Friendly Working Scotland said:

When their childcare issues are considered in combination with the drought of flexible jobs available and issues around overwork, it is no wonder at the point their child is diagnosed with a disability one parent often chooses to give up work. This is often the mother—positioning the father firmly in the work sphere and significantly reducing his involvement and often leading to an extended period outside the labour market for the mother.<sup>131</sup>

96. The CBI put forward the view that the current policy works for employers because they have the ability to say no if they need to.<sup>132</sup> The CBI told us that if a company feels a job can be done flexibly it should advertise it in that way from the start. We asked the Minister whether the Prime Minister's call for default flexibility would be put on a legislative footing. She told us it was not the preferred option, though:

we would never rule out legislation. If you can effect change a little more gradually, with more substance and taking more employers with you on the journey, even if it takes a bit longer, that is a more solid foundation to see these policies reach their ultimate goal. I would prefer to take a little longer before we reach for legislation, which is always at our disposal.<sup>133</sup>

## Conclusions and recommendation

97. **The Government told us that a review of the right to request flexible working will be carried out in 2019 with a response to this assessment in 2020 or 2021. The Prime Minister, however, has already echoed the call of our predecessor Committee for all jobs to be made available on flexible terms by default.**

98. *We believe that fathers should not have to wait up to four more years to have access to working arrangements that support their parenting responsibilities, and nor should their families. The cultural factors that militate against fathers asking for flexible arrangements and that make employers less likely to grant such arrangements to fathers are more likely to be overcome if flexible working becomes the new default. We recommend that the Government brings forward legislation now to make real the Prime Minister's intention to ensure that all new jobs are available for flexible working, unless the employer can demonstrate an immediate and continuing business case against doing so.*

130 [The Timewise Flexible Jobs Index 2017](#)

131 Working Families and Family Friendly Working Scotland ([FWP0037](#))

132 Q81 [Neil Carberry] (Session 2016–17)

133 Q148 (Session 2017–19)

## 6 Unpaid parental leave and time off for dependants

99. Unpaid parental leave gives working parents some flexibility to attend medical appointments, school visits or for other childcare needs. Employees who have been employed by their company for one year are entitled to 18 weeks' unpaid leave for each child and adopted child, up to the child's 18th birthday, with a limit of four weeks leave per child per year (unless the employer agrees otherwise). Employment rights are protected during parental leave. Unpaid parental leave must be taken in blocks of one week, but parents of disabled children can take it in one-day periods. Employees with dependants (including children) have the right to take emergency leave to deal with issues such as a breakdown in childcare. Employers do not have to pay for this but it may be covered in employees' contracts.

### Are the Government's policies on unpaid parental leave and time off for dependents effective?

100. The Government does not know whether its policies on unpaid parental leave and time off for dependants are effective because it does not hold data on their use. Mark Holmes of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy told us that there is no data on take-up because such leave is unpaid and so employers do not need to claim back from the Government. He said the Government relies on survey evidence for this kind of information but that the last survey was conducted before the policy came in; this is another policy on which the Government will be gathering data in 2018.<sup>134</sup>

101. The TUC told us that only a minority of parents use their right to unpaid parental leave each year because it is unpaid and there is little awareness of it. Fathers who spoke to us had different levels of awareness about their entitlements to time off for childcare-related matters. One father reported that:

The other day my daughter had to go for her three-year injections. I had to take a day's holiday for it. I was not offered any time. I took it unpaid. No disrespect to the retail sector but it is the lowest paid as it is, anyway. I cannot afford to take a day off.<sup>135</sup>

102. The TUC also called for parents to be entitled to paid leave to care for a sick child. It told us about good practice at the Department of Transport where parents of disabled children can take up to three weeks' paid parental leave in any 12-month period up to a maximum entitlement of 26 weeks' paid parental leave.<sup>136</sup>

103. When asked about paid parental leave or carers' leave, the Minister recognised that pay inequalities between mothers and fathers would mean there was financial pressure on men not to take unpaid time off work and that this "reinforces the obligations of mothers to take the greater amount of parental leave". The Minister told us that this was something the Government was looking at.<sup>137</sup>

134 Q140 (Session 2017–19)

135 Q64 [Witness G] (Session 2017–19)

136 Trades Union Congress ([FWP0055](#))

137 Q142 (Session 2017–19)



104. Unpaid parental leave and time off for dependants (emergency leave) have the potential to form an important part of the range of workplace policies supporting fathers to fulfil their childcare responsibilities. However, the Government does not gather data on use of these provisions, so it is unclear whether or not its objectives for these policies are being met. We have real concerns that the policies are undermined by a lack of awareness, amongst both employers and employees.

105. *The Government should collect age and sex-disaggregated data on the take-up, and reason for take-up, of unpaid parental leave and time off for dependants in order to be able to assess the effectiveness of these policies for fathers and mothers.*

## 7 Changing the culture on fathers in the workplace

106. Well-intentioned policies are being undermined by a culture in which traditional gender roles prevail; where men are viewed as the breadwinner and women as the primary carer for their children, despite changing social roles at home and at work. The Government must ensure that the design of its policies is bold enough to overcome these cultural barriers, and that those policies go hand-in-hand with action to change the culture.

107. That culture affects the environment in which individual line managers make the daily decisions that determine the support fathers get in the workplace. The best company policy can be undermined by an unsupportive line manager, while a supportive line-manager can be a crucial factor in enabling a father to fulfil his childcare responsibilities and feel job satisfaction.<sup>138</sup> One father told us that that, even though his workplace had no written policies when his daughter was born, his employer was very supportive: “My employer said I could take whatever I wanted; there was no formal agreement. He just said I could take as much time off as I wanted.”<sup>139</sup> Conversely, we were disappointed to be told by some fathers that employers can be “intentionally obfuscating” to men seeking to take up their entitlements.<sup>140</sup> One father told us that “generally there is a lot of resistance to getting any flexibility out of my employer”.<sup>141</sup> Support and training for the line manager on issues such as flexible working are crucial to implementing good policies in practice.<sup>142</sup>

108. There were very mixed levels of awareness of workplace policies among fathers who gave evidence to us.<sup>143</sup> Research suggests that, whilst there are high levels of awareness amongst fathers of their right to statutory paternity leave, many fathers do not know about other policies, or believe them to be aimed at women.<sup>144</sup> The Government says that around 49 per cent of people have heard of its flagship shared parental leave policy, but only eight per cent claim to know a lot about the policy.<sup>145</sup>

109. Fathers told us that some employers themselves may not know much about parental entitlements, still less promote them to their staff. One father said, “In my workplace, there is no visible information on what the policy is. Most of the information I have has been from [the union].”<sup>146</sup> Fathers were among those telling us that there needs to be much wider promotion of policies so that managers are aware of them. One father summed it up by saying that: “That first conversation between an individual and line manager should not be the individual educating the line manager.”<sup>147</sup>

138 Working Families and Family Friendly Scotland ([FWP0037](#)); Trades Union Congress ([FWP0055](#)); Avenir consulting Ltd ([FWP0019](#))

139 Q14 [Witness H] (Session 2017–19)

140 Q11 [Witness A] (Session 2017–19)

141 Q139 [Witness G] (Session 2017–19)

142 Q98 [Witness D] (Session 2017–19)

143 Q26 [Witness F] (Session 2017–19)

144 Fatherhood Institute, [Cash or Carry? Fathers combining work and care in the UK](#), December 2017; Trades Union Congress, [Better jobs for mums and dads](#), 2017

145 Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, [New ‘Share the joy’ campaign promotes shared parental leave rights for parents](#), 12 February 2018

146 Q35 [Witness A] (Session 2017–19)

147 Q34 [Witness C] (Session 2017–19)

110. Duncan Fisher told us that for policies to work, you have to promote culture change; “For example, in Scandinavian countries they had advertising campaigns about men and babies. They put it up on posters and things. You have to put it out there, be proactive, get behind it and believe in it.”<sup>148</sup> Several witnesses praised Scotland’s Year of the Dad campaign in 2016. The Centre for Social Justice said that this campaign, sponsored by the Scottish Government, encouraged employers to understand how they could make their work places ‘father-friendly’. It promoted positive perceptions of fatherhood alongside practical guidance and support delivered at a local level.<sup>149</sup> Fathers Network Scotland, a partner in that campaign, told us of its wide reach through events, media, social media and web resources. It reported that “The year was hugely successful in raising awareness [ ... ], deliberately avoiding the traditional polarities of gendered roles in favour of a win-win approach that was embraced by men and women alike.”<sup>150</sup>

111. The Government recognises issues of social attitudes and wider culture and the impact they have:

Men’s views of their role within the family and wider society are influenced by cultural norms and what they think society expects of them. These views impact on the decisions fathers make in relation to taking up the leave they are entitled to and considering the option to work more flexibly. The Government is determined to influence social attitudes where there are barriers to fathers being properly involved in caring for their children and mothers participating in the labour market where they want to.<sup>151</sup>

112. In addition to an advertising campaign launched in February 2018 to promote shared parental leave, the Government told us about work it is doing with the ‘Working Forward’ campaign of the Equality and Human Rights Commission (initially designed as a maternal campaign to end maternity discrimination but now targeting fathers). It also said it worked with organisations such as Working Families, which works with parents and employers.<sup>152</sup>

113. We welcome the Government’s commitment to addressing social attitudes and to promoting policies. We consider, however, that the Government needs to undertake long-term, strategic work to promote policies for fathers and focus specifically on breaking down social norms to effect long-term cultural change that will benefit both fathers and mothers.

114. We heard that equality legislation is one way of changing the culture. Pregnancy and maternity is one of the ‘protected characteristics’ under the Equality Act 2010. The maternity element of the pregnancy and maternity protected characteristic, in the employment context, is linked to maternity leave.<sup>153</sup> Some argued that extending the protected characteristics to include parental status<sup>154</sup> or paternity<sup>155</sup> would help create

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148 Q21 [Duncan Fisher] (Session 2016–17)

149 Centre for Social Justice and Steve Double MP ([FWP0031](#))

150 Fathers Network Scotland ([FWP0033](#))

151 Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy ([FWP0054](#))

152 Q141 (Session 2017–19)

153 Equality and Human Rights Commission website, [Protected characteristics](#), accessed March 2018

154 Mrs Jasmine Kelland ([FWP0021](#))

155 Barnado’s ([FWP0024](#))

change. Edward Davies of the Centre for Social Justice told us: “There will be a raft of things that Governments can do to change culture, but this would be one that would send a really strong message to employers that this matters.”<sup>156</sup>

**115. The Government has told us that it is determined to influence the social attitudes that prevent more fathers spending more time caring for their children. Its campaign to promote shared parental leave is welcome, but does not constitute a plan of action for achieving wider societal change. Without bolder policy design and a long-term campaign to change attitudes in workplaces and in wider society, the potential for achieving the Government’s ambition of shared care appears to be limited.**

*116. To help drive the cultural change in the workplace that the Government wishes to see, it should consider the benefits of amending the protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010 to add an additional characteristic of ‘paternity’, looking at what period such a characteristic would cover and to which groups of working fathers it would apply.*

## 8 Conclusions

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117. The role of fathers in their children's lives is changing. They are increasingly taking on responsibility for childcare and increasingly want to do so, and this is especially so for younger fathers. However, it is still the case that mothers in couple families take on responsibility for twice as much of the childcare, and most of the domestic work, while fathers are more likely to be the main breadwinner.<sup>157</sup> This contributes to the gender pay gap, which is far wider between mothers and fathers than it is between women and men in general.

118. The Government wants fathers to be more involved in, and take on more responsibility for, care of their children and it wants workplaces to support them to do this. It acknowledges, however, that its flagship policy of shared parental leave in its current form will not achieve this for the majority of fathers and we agree with this assessment. The review of shared parental leave in 2018 is an opportunity that must not be missed to consider how best to remove the barriers to fathers fulfilling their caring obligations to their children and to mothers participating fully in the workplace. Ultimately this will help to reduce pay inequalities. Opportunities must be seized to gather better data and to reform the full range of parental entitlements, including making them available for more fathers. We have set out a clear set of recommendations to make policies more effective at creating the change in fathers' and mothers' lives that the Government wants to see.

# Conclusions and recommendations

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## Introduction

1. The Government has accepted the Taylor Review of Modern Working Practices' recommendation that all employees and workers should be given a written statement of rights on day one of their job and says it is consulting on what should be included. We ask the Government to ensure that this statement includes all parental benefits. (Paragraph 17)

## Antenatal appointments

2. There is a statutory right to time off for ante-natal appointments but some employers may be putting hurdles in the way of fathers exercising this right. Fathers should not be prevented from attending appointments because they cannot afford to do so, are not aware that they have this right or because their employer does not allow them to. (Paragraph 34)
3. *Fathers who are employees should be entitled to paid time off to attend antenatal appointments as a day-one right. Agency worker fathers should be entitled to unpaid time off to attend antenatal appointments as a day-one right, and to paid time off to attend antenatal appointments once they have been with the same company for 12 weeks. The Government should consider whether the entitlement to attend two appointments is sufficiently supportive for parents of multiple babies or where other factors mean additional appointments are required.* (Paragraph 35)

## Paternity leave and pay

4. Paternity leave and pay have the potential to meet the Government's objective of supporting fathers to be at home around the time of their child's birth, but they need updating to meet the needs of the modern family in a changing workforce. (Paragraph 44)
5. We recognise the different policy objectives of maternity leave and paternity leave, but we are not convinced that this should mean that expectant fathers should not have a day-one entitlement to paternity leave in a new job. The current qualifying criteria risk reinforcing a message that parenting is a less important role for fathers than for mothers. Nor do we believe that fathers who are agency workers or who are self-employed should be left without access to financial support at the time of the birth of their children. (Paragraph 45)
6. *Fathers who are employees should be eligible for two weeks' paternity leave as a day-one right, similar to maternity leave. Fathers who are agency workers should be eligible for paternity pay with the same eligibility requirements as agency worker mothers have for maternity pay. Self-employed fathers should be eligible for a Paternity Allowance, similar to Maternity Allowance.* (Paragraph 46)
7. We do not believe that the Government's objective of supporting fathers to share care can be met if paternity pay is so low that better-off fathers are more able to

take time off at the start of their child's life. This militates against the Government's aim that fathers should be able to have time with their new child. *We reiterate the recommendation of our predecessor Committee in its report on the gender pay gap that two weeks' paternity leave should be paid at 90 per cent of earnings (capped), similar to maternity pay which is paid for six weeks at 90 per cent (uncapped).* (Paragraph 50)

8. *We recommend that the new edition of the Maternity and Paternity Rights Survey should gather evidence about:*
  - *the effectiveness and take-up of paternity leave and pay, including the length of paternity leave in cases of multiple births or where the mother or baby is in hospital for an extended period of time; and*
  - *the extent to which employers top up these benefits or have their own parental leave policies.* (Paragraph 56)

### Shared parental leave and pay

9. The Government's objective is for mothers and fathers to share the task of caring for their children more equally. The current shared parental leave policy will not achieve this on a large scale, as the Government's own estimates of take-up show. The review of shared parental leave in 2018 presents an opportunity to look at ways of improving the policy, but also to consider alternative models which would better meet the Government's objectives. The evidence we have received indicates that a dedicated period of leave for fathers could create change on the scale the Government wants in the longer term. (Paragraph 82)
10. *We recommend that, as part of its review of shared parental leave in 2018, the Government undertake an analysis of the costs and benefits of an alternative policy of 12 weeks paternal leave and pay to replace shared parental leave. This should include the following elements:*
  - *Fathers and second parents would be eligible for this leave in their own right; it would not affect mothers' existing entitlements to maternity leave and pay;*
  - *The period of paternal leave would only be available to fathers in the first year after the child's birth; It would be available both to employees and to agency workers; and*
  - *It would be paid at 90 per cent of salary for of the first four weeks (with a cap for higher earners), and the remaining eight weeks paid at statutory levels.* (Paragraph 83)
11. *We acknowledge that the initial costs of implementing such a policy would be considerable. The Government's analysis should separate out the costs of each of the features we have outlined, and set out how variable take-up and imposing caps on pay at different levels would affect these costs. There would, however, also be potential*

*for significant gains to the public purse in the long term, and we ask the Government to set out and take into account a comprehensive list of these factors in its costing. Among the likely benefits would be:*

- *The saving on maternity pay accrued from mothers if they return to work early;*
- *The likelihood of mothers remaining in the workforce in the longer term, due to fathers' greater responsibilities for childcare and the implications for their contribution to taxation throughout their careers;*
- *Mothers' longer term financial security, decreased likelihood of poverty in older age and a better pension; and*
- *Wider societal benefits including for children's health and development. (Paragraph 84)*

12. We accept that the alternative policy we have outlined would not, on its own, replicate the current option of fathers being the primary carer in the child's first year, but we have seen no evidence that any but a very small proportion of families would be able to or choose to do this under shared parental leave as currently designed. For most families, this is an offer on paper only. Instead, our suggested alternative policy could offer a much larger proportion of fathers the option of taking a significant period of leave in the child's first year which could have a far wider impact on fathers' caring and domestic responsibilities, on mothers' participation in the workplace and on longer-term cultural change. (Paragraph 85)

### The right to request flexible working

13. The Government told us that a review of the right to request flexible working will be carried out in 2019 with a response to this assessment in 2020 or 2021. The Prime Minister, however, has already echoed the call of our predecessor Committee for all jobs to be made available on flexible terms by default. (Paragraph 97)
14. *We believe that fathers should not have to wait up to four more years to have access to working arrangements that support their parenting responsibilities, and nor should their families. The cultural factors that militate against fathers asking for flexible arrangements and that make employers less likely to grant such arrangements to fathers are more likely to be overcome if flexible working becomes the new default. We recommend that the Government brings forward legislation now to make real the Prime Minister's intention to ensure that all new jobs are available for flexible working, unless the employer can demonstrate an immediate and continuing business case against doing so. (Paragraph 98)*

### Unpaid parental leave and time off for dependants

15. Unpaid parental leave and time off for dependants (emergency leave) have the potential to form an important part of the range of workplace policies supporting fathers to fulfil their childcare responsibilities. However, the Government does not



gather data on use of these provisions, so it is unclear whether or not its objectives for these policies are being met. We have real concerns that the policies are undermined by a lack of awareness, amongst both employers and employees. (Paragraph 104)

16. *The Government should collect age and sex-disaggregated data on the take-up, and reason for take-up, of unpaid parental leave and time off for dependants in order to be able to assess the effectiveness of these policies for fathers and mothers.* (Paragraph 105)

### Changing the culture on fathers in the workplace

17. The Government has told us that it is determined to influence the social attitudes that prevent more fathers spending more time caring for their children. Its campaign to promote shared parental leave is welcome, but does not constitute a plan of action for achieving wider societal change. Without bolder policy design and a long-term campaign to change attitudes in workplaces and in wider society, the potential for achieving the Government's ambition of shared care appears to be limited. (Paragraph 115)
18. *To help drive the cultural change in the workplace that the Government wishes to see, it should consider the benefits of amending the protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010 to add an additional characteristic of 'paternity', looking at what period such a characteristic would cover and to which groups of working fathers it would apply.* (Paragraph 116)

## Formal minutes

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The following declarations of interest relating to the inquiry were made:

### 1 November 2017

Mr Gavin Shuker declared the following interest:

A non-pecuniary interest as a member of a trade union for which one of the witnesses was a representative.

### Wednesday 7 March 2018

Members present:

Mrs Maria Miller, in the Chair

Tonia Antoniazzi	Eddie Hughes
Angela Crawley	Jess Phillips
Vicky Ford	Mr Gavin Shuker

Draft Report (*Fathers and the workplace*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

*Ordered*, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 118 read and agreed to.

Summary agreed to.

*Resolved*, That the Report be the First Report of the Committee to the House.

*Ordered*, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

*Ordered*, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available (Standing Order No. 134).

[Adjourned till Wednesday 21 March 2018]

# Witnesses

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Oral evidence was received over two parliamentary sessions.

The following witnesses gave evidence. Transcripts can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page 2016–17](#) of the Committee’s website.

## Wednesday 22 March 2017

*Question number (Session 2016–17)*

**Sarah Jackson**, Chief Executive Officer, Working Families, **Edward Davies**, Policy Director, Centre for Social Justice, **Duncan Fisher**, Co-Founder and Director, Family Initiative, **Professor Tina Miller**, Oxford Brookes University.

[Q1–45](#)

## Wednesday 19 April 2017

**Neil Carberry**, Director, People and Skills, CBI, **Paul Deemer**, Head of Diversity and Inclusion, NHS Employers, **Matthew Creagh**, TUC, **Jo Swinson**, CIPD.

[Q46–102](#)

The following witnesses gave evidence. Transcripts can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page 2017–19](#) of the Committee’s website.

## Wednesday 1 November 2017

*Question number (Session 2017–19)*

**Witness A, Witness B, Witness C, Witness D, Witness E, Witness F, Witness G, Witness H.** A group of fathers who wish to stay anonymous.

[Q1–98](#)

## Wednesday 22 November 2017

**Margot James MP**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, **Mark Holmes**, Deputy Director, Labour Market, Individual Rights, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.

[Q99–175](#)

## Published written evidence

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Written evidence was received over two parliamentary sessions.

The following written evidence was received and can be viewed on the inquiry publications pages for the [2016–17](#) and [2017–19](#) sessions of the Committee's website.

FWP numbers are generated by the evidence processing system and so may not be complete.

### Session 2016–17

- 1 A member of the public ([FWP0001](#))
- 2 A member of the public ([FWP0002](#))
- 3 A member of the public ([FWP0003](#))
- 4 A member of the public ([FWP0004](#))
- 5 A member of the public ([FWP0005](#))
- 6 A member of the public ([FWP0007](#))
- 7 A member of the public ([FWP0008](#))
- 8 A member of the public ([FWP0009](#))
- 9 A member of the public ([FWP0010](#))
- 10 A member of the public ([FWP0011](#))
- 11 A member of the public ([FWP0012](#))
- 12 A member of the public ([FWP0013](#))
- 13 A member of the public ([FWP0014](#))
- 14 A member of the public ([FWP0015](#))
- 15 A member of the public ([FWP0016](#))
- 16 A member of the public ([FWP0017](#))
- 17 A member of the public ([FWP0018](#))
- 18 A member of the public ([FWP0025](#))
- 19 A member of the public ([FWP0034](#))
- 20 A member of the public ([FWP0036](#))
- 21 A member of the public ([FWP0041](#))
- 22 A member of the public ([FWP0050](#))
- 23 A member of the public ([FWP0051](#))
- 24 A member of the public ([FWP0052](#))
- 25 A member of the public ([FWP0056](#))
- 26 A member of the public ([FWP0058](#))
- 27 A member of the public ([FWP0006](#))
- 28 Avenir Consulting Ltd ([FWP0019](#))
- 29 Barnardo's ([FWP0024](#))
- 30 Bliss ([FWP0062](#))
- 31 British Land ([FWP0060](#))

- 32 Business in the Community ([FWP0059](#))
- 33 Centre for Social Justice and Steve Double MP ([FWP0031](#))
- 34 Chwarae Teg ([FWP0032](#))
- 35 CIPD ([FWP0038](#))
- 36 Dad's House Ashford ([FWP0030](#))
- 37 Deloitte ([FWP0046](#))
- 38 Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) ([FWP0054](#))
- 39 Dr Emma Banister and Dr Ben Kerrane ([FWP0039](#))
- 40 Dr Heejung Chung ([FWP0048](#))
- 41 Dr Helen Norman, Professor Colette Fagan and Professor Mark Elliot ([FWP0028](#))
- 42 Dr Susan Milner ([FWP0061](#))
- 43 Dr Tina Haux ([FWP0045](#))
- 44 Dr Tina Miller ([FWP0040](#))
- 45 Equality Commission for Northern Ireland ([FWP0026](#))
- 46 Families Need Fathers ([FWP0049](#))
- 47 Family and Childcare Trust ([FWP0047](#))
- 48 Family Initiative ([FWP0035](#))
- 49 Fathers Network Scotland ([FWP0033](#))
- 50 Fawcett Society ([FWP0053](#))
- 51 FNF Both Parents Matter Cymru ([FWP0043](#))
- 52 Girlguiding ([FWP0029](#))
- 53 How Do You Do It Pty Ltd ([FWP0022](#), [FWP0023](#))
- 54 Maternity Action ([FWP0057](#))
- 55 Men and Boys Coalition ([FWP0042](#))
- 56 Mile End Institute & History and Policy Parenting Forum ([FWP0027](#))
- 57 Mrs Jasmine Kelland ([FWP0021](#))
- 58 NASUWT ([FWP0020](#))
- 59 Professor Margaret O'Brien ([FWP0044](#))
- 60 Trades Union Congress ([FWP0055](#))
- 61 Working Families and Family Friendly Working Scotland ([FWP0037](#))

### Session 2017–19

- 62 Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy ([FWP0001](#))

## List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

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All publications from the Committee are available on the [publications page](#) of the Committee's website. The reference number of the Government's response to each Report is printed in brackets after the HC printing number.

### Session 2017–19

First Special Report	Ensuring strong equalities legislation after the EU exit: Government Response to the Committee's Seventh Report of Session 2016–17	HC 385
Second Special Report	Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 5 in the UK: Government and Office for National Statistics Responses to the Committee's Eighth Report of Session 2016–17	HC 426