

Parents call for ‘real’ change for families in Scotland as new bill set to bring better flexible working rights

Parents who have struggled to juggle family and working life will call for ‘real’ family friendly working practices in Scotland to bridge the chasm between legislation and reality.

They will join Parenting Across Scotland (1) – a partnership of high-profile charities which offers support to parents and carers in Scotland – to call for employers to take legislation seriously and ensure proper enforcement of family friendly laws to enable families in Scotland to better balance working and home life.

[Parenting Across Scotland](#) (PAS), is hosting the event, in partnership with [Working Families](#) and [Fathers Network Scotland](#), at the Scottish Parliament tonight (Wednesday).

New legislation (the Children and Families Bill UK currently going through Westminster) will bring in new rights relating to maternity and paternity leave, and flexible working. (2) This will give parents the right to take parental leave more flexibly and to share parental leave between parents. It will also extend the right to flexible working to a wider range of employees, enabling more people to work flexibly and balance work and family more easily.

The ‘**Making Scotland’s workplaces family friendly**’ event will hear from parents about how they struggle to juggle family life and work, and how some have had to change career, or move to self employment to manage.

The event will look at how the new legislation coming in later this year will help parents balance work and life, and lay down a gauntlet to employers in Scotland.

Clare Simpson, Parenting Across Scotland Project Manager, said: “For many families there is a chasm between the legislation and the reality. On the one hand, the law says they are entitled to, for example, paternity leave, or carers’ leave. Yet on the other, many are afraid to ask because of the impact they fear this would have on their career, and in the worst case scenario, even if they asked would be told no.

“In many cases it’s a simple lack of knowledge about the law which means employers refuse requests, or workers don’t know what they can ask for. We’re working jointly over the coming months to ensure that employers know what their side of the bargain is and what the new legislation means.”

She added: “Both families and employers can gain from flexible working arrangements within the workplace. For parents it means less stress when it comes to childcare arrangements and for employers, flexible working can mean higher retention rates of staff and better employee engagement and productivity.” (3)

As well as the new legislation, making Scotland’s workplaces more family friendly is a key commitment in the Scottish Government’s National Parenting Strategy which states: “We will encourage businesses to promote family-friendly working practices”.

At Wednesday’s event, Sarah Jackson, Chief Executive of Working Families, will speak about good practice for working parents and how employers and employees can both benefit.

Three parents will then speak about their experiences of working life. And an employer will speak about its own family friendly working practices, and the benefits that it has brought to the company and its employees.

Sarah Jackson OBE, Chief Executive of Working Families, (4) said: “At this key point, it’s important that we hear from parents about the impact that working life has had on their family life, that we consider how we can inform Scottish employers about the new legislation that will impact on them, and work out how together we can make Scotland’s workplaces more family friendly.”

Sam Pringle, Fathers Network Scotland, said: “There is an outdated assumption that family friendly working means part time working only desired by mothers. Fathers don’t use many of the family friendly initiatives that are available because they’re not aware of them and think it would be detrimental to their career. The price they pay if that they don’t see their children as much as they would like, domestic chores are left to those who are at home and therefore many fathers don’t feel they have a work life balance.

“The new legislation to extend the right to request flexible working to all employees will hopefully remove the assumption that flexible working is only a mother’s choice, but only if men start using it. We hope that pioneering fathers, who show there is more to life than work, will show other fathers that it is possible to take up policies such as parental leave and flexible working. At present less than 1% of fathers take longer than 2 weeks off when they have a new baby. Why is this?”

In summary, Parts 6-8 of the Children & Families Bill (2) will:

- ? Replace the existing system of maternity and additional paternity leave and pay with a new system of shared parental leave and pay, under which qualifying couple parents can share 50 of the mother’s 52 weeks of leave and 39 weeks of statutory pay between them;
- ? Introduce a right for fathers/partners to unpaid leave to attend up to two antenatal appointments with their pregnant partners; and
- ? Extend the right to request flexible working to *all* employees, but replace the existing statutory procedure with an Acas code of practice and a duty on employers to respond ‘reasonably’.

ENDS/

Notes to Editors

1. Parenting Across Scotland partners are: Aberlour Childcare Trust; Capability Scotland; Children 1st; Children in Scotland; Families Outside; One Parent Families Scotland; Relationships Scotland; Scottish Adoption; SMC (formerly Scottish Marriage Care). Together the partners work with thousands of parents throughout Scotland.
2. Making Scotland’s workplaces more family friendly is a key commitment in the Scottish Government’s National Parenting Strategy. In 2014, new legislation (the Children and Families Bill UK) will bring in new rights relating to maternity and paternity leave, and flexible working. A number of these changes – for example, Shared Parental Leave and Right to Request Flexible Working, are not due to be implemented until 2015. For a full breakdown of the provisions of the bill visit <http://www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/RP13-11/children-and-families-bill> **but please note only the employment law provisions i.e. parental leave and flexible working apply to Scotland.**
3. Falling absenteeism and higher retention leads to a reduction in costs – 65 per cent of employers said flexible working practices had a positive effect on recruitment and retention thus saving on recruitment, induction and training costs. *From: Flexible Working: working for*

families, working for business. A report by the Family Friendly Working Hours Taskforce.
<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/family-friendly-task-force-report.pdf>

4. Involved in work-life balance campaigning and culture change since joining Parents At Work in 1994, Sarah Jackson is an acknowledged expert in the field, and was included in Human Resources Magazine's inaugural 'HR top 100 Most Influential' in 2006 and again in 2007.

ENDS/

Berry Red PR

p: 01312432606

m: 07747624458

t: @mediawummin

www.berryredpr.co.uk