

Your experiences of maternity leave

Discrimination and prejudice during pregnancy and maternity leave is rife, although there are pockets of good practice. Read the experiences of parents and employers below and share yours in the comment thread

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Chief executive, Cause4

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I think things have moved on significantly from five or six years ago but I still come across stories of friends that have found attitudes have changed towards them and their work on announcing pregnancy, and larger employers that have made it difficult to go back.

As a fast growing small business we do find the gap of maternity leave hard to accommodate from a resourcing perspective and also managing client work during this period. However, where we can really support is on return to work where we can be very flexible around family commitments and offer home working as an option. I think there is still prejudice and discrimination unfortunately.

Additional support for small businesses to cover the actual period of maternity leave would be useful, bearing in mind the flexible benefits that can be factored in on return. The issue is that maternity leave doesn't really distinguish between small and large businesses - and for the smaller firms it can place a huge burden in terms of cost, time and administration.

When margins are lean and you are in start-up mode, investing to grow, it can be incredibly difficult to have a gap in the team that needs additional resourcing and the uncertainty in holding a post open for 12 months when managing growth on tight budgets is an undoubted pressure. Support and help to manage the transition could be a lifeline for SMEs wanting to support their staff.

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