

I believe any leave for new parents should be 'paternity leave'. By limiting the leave to women it is taking away a legitimate choice for families. Many women are now the highest income earner in a family and are often required to return to work within a few weeks or months of the baby being born. I returned to work after 4 months as I had no paid leave (besides 6 weeks holiday pay) and my income was essential to meet mortgage repayments, while my husband took paternity leave to care for our daughter. He is lucky enough to work for local government where they are able to use their sick pay for paternity leave.

Many people believe that if the mother isn't strapped to the baby then breast feeding isn't possible. This is completely false. I work full time and my husband brings my daughter into me twice a day at work for a feed. It takes no more than 15 minutes at a time and I just work the extra half an hour to make up for the feeding time. This is a real option for lots of families and I just don't think that this kind of flexibility is encouraged by society or business. I know it was a first for my company, and as a male dominated company I am not sure they are completely comfortable with it.

I am sick of hearing about 'stay at home mums' and 'working mums'. It's rubbish. It is just another way to make women feel inadequate if they're unable or unwilling to do the traditional stay at home role. It may be hard to believe but there are actually 'stay at home dads' and 'working dads'. My husband is an excellent carer, as most fathers are because they love their children.

Any leave must be paternity leave. It would help fight the discrimination women of child bearing age are exposed to and show that society believes that both women and men are equally responsible for the care of children.

Perhaps paternity leave could be a system of 'banking' leave for people who believe they may wish to become pregnant in the future. Annual leave or time in lieu could be stored as 'paternity leave'. For each week the employee contributes to the paternity leave bank, the employee and the government contribute a set amount, maybe one or two days each. In the event that the employee leaves a company perhaps the company contributed leave is forfeited and the saved annual leave/time in lieu is paid out but the government leave goes across to the next job. Perhaps companies aren't required to contribute and only government contributes? The paternity leave should be capped at 6 months.

I believe that raising a child is not just the responsibility of the mother; fathers can play an equally important role if given the opportunity.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Susan Kay