

LWN Motion to Women's Conference

Parental leave

Having a child should not limit women's economic potential. Every year, 54,000 women lose their job during maternity leave. Uptake of Shared Parental Leave is extremely low at just 2%. Uptake of ten days Statutory Paternity Leave is not measured by the government but some men's employers illegally refuse even this. Couples make decisions on parental leave based on their respective incomes, but in the UK, women earn an average of 14% less than men. Rates of all types of parental leave pay are among the lowest in Europe, with 25% of women accruing debts of over £2,700 during maternity leave. Parental leave should not be a barrier to public life, and we support campaigns in Parliament and local government to introduce formal baby leave arrangements for elected officials. Only 33% of councillors and only 17% of council leaders are women, yet only 4% of councils have a parental leave policy for councillors. Women are three times more likely to shoulder the majority of childcare than men.

Parental leave policy, culture and enforcement must go further to reduce the entrenchment of women as primary carers. The Labour Party must work with trade unions to challenge the government and employers on the scandal of maternity leave discrimination. Labour must develop a robust parental leave and pay policy which reduces women's economic and domestic disadvantage. Elected officials deserve baby leave too and Labour must call on all councils to introduce parental leave policies for councillors.

243 words