

I thought I would share with you my personal experience of maternal discrimination in the workplace as I'm sure it is shared by many mothers needing to work part-time due to childcare responsibilities.

I was forced to leave a part-time job in a [REDACTED] I was given full time work to do in part time hours. The extra work I was given was also several levels above my pay grade, I know this because some of the work came from a colleague who was on a much higher paid grade than me.

My manager refused to discuss these issues with me and had very poor management skills and I got so stressed I was forced to leave. I was unaware of my employment rights as if I had known, I would have taken my employer to employment tribunal.

Many mothers can't bear the stress this employment discrimination causes especially when it impacts on their childcare responsibilities.

For most mothers, their children come first and they will just leave a job. Much of this maternal discrimination taking place in the workplace is hidden as most mothers will not want the extra stress or cost to take their employer to an employment tribunal and are forced out of the workplace.

Here is my experience and evidence in relation to the following terms of reference:

Terms of reference

The Committee's terms of reference for its inquiry are to:

– How the Welsh Government is taking action on the findings of the Equality and Human Rights Commission review into pregnancy and maternity discrimination;

I don't know what WAG is doing.

However it doesn't take much of a stretch of imagination to see that maternal discrimination is contributing to 20% of our children growing up in poverty in Wales, if nothing is done, this is set to rise to 40% in 2021 (Bevan Foundation). Also because mothers are being forced out of the workplace by

inflexible and discriminatory employers, they can't go on to work in senior roles or public life.

– How the Welsh Government is working towards its strategic equality objective of “identifying and reducing the causes of employment, skills and pay inequalities related to gender”, particularly in relation to pregnancy and maternity;

I think WAG could ask employers to provide more data on mothers in the workplace. They should also be made a protected group in Equality reporting, like sexual orientation or ethnic minorities e.g. Data should be gathered.

On parental status, e.g. Do you have children under the age of 18 and childcare responsibilities? Do you work flexibly, job share or part-time. Have you been promoted since having children / working flexibly etc Mothers should be tracked through organisations, to make sure they have career progression are not being discriminated against. Also a certain percentage of senior roles should be available as job share, part-time or flexible and employers should be made to report on this.

Information about childcare and other caring responsibilities should be included in diversity training, so that all staff are educated and more understanding about colleagues who have these caring duties. Shockingly I found the worst discriminators against me were childless women or older women without childcare responsibilities. So this institutionalised sexism is not just coming from some men but from some women too. No wonder mothers aren't progressing in the work place.

– The extent to which the Welsh Government's Economic Action Plan and employability programmes address issues faced by mothers;

I think information about their employment rights should be given to mothers with their NHS maternity pack. Discrimination against mothers has become so bad now that it is not a question of if a mother will be discriminated against but when.

Discrimination can be very subtle and hidden, e.g. having meetings in the evening or school holidays can be a problem for parents, networking drinks after work etc.

– Whether the new childcare offer is matched with targeted support for mothers to enter or return to work.

Is the childcare offer extended to children of school age? After school clubs can be very expensive e.g. My children's primary school after school club charges £10 per child for childcare

3.30 – 6pm. So for 3 children to have after school childcare for a week the total cost is £210. Most mothers are in low paid work, so this is a huge proportion of their weekly wage.

Most single parents are mothers, and many have no family or partners to help with childcare. So to enable them to work 9–5pm, they have to pay this money.

Is there subsidised childcare available during school holidays? Only teachers have 3months holiday, other professions have @ 28 days holidays. What do single parents

Do if they have no family to help with childcare in school holidays?

Also, have you actually asked mothers what they want? Many mothers I know want to look after their children, work school hours, term time only and at a level commensurate with their level of ability.

E.g. My preferred job would be graduate and management level, 9am–3.30pm, school term time only. Why aren't there jobs like this? Many employers say you can't do senior level jobs flexibly, why not?

Women are not going to stop having children, so society needs to change to accommodate mothers and children's needs. Also have you actually asked what mothers want? Some mothers want to work part-time and have that value time raising their children, they just want to be paid properly and at the level of their ability, not have to take low paid, low level jobs, just because these are the only ones available to accommodate their childcare responsibilities.

██████████ I briefly took part in a Jobcentre, EU scheme which had funding to address childcare cost barriers for unemployed mothers. I have to say I have never felt so humiliated in my life. Just walking into the jobcentre environment made me depressed, with security guards intimidating you on arrival. There was no funding for retraining or confidence giving courses for mother returners. I was made to feel that all my work and life experience prior to having children counted for nothing. I got the distinct impression

that jobcentre staff didn't care what type of job I did, just that I got any job, I was offered a double glazing salesperson role, retail etc, both were not flexible work and would not fit around my childcare responsibilities. I didn't feel this added value or extra support to my job search, I was doing most of the things they suggested from home and the whole experience took away any confidence or self-esteem I had left.

The financial support was minimal too, I think two weeks help toward childcare costs once I started work, so for me that would have been £200. No other financial help towards childcare was available.

I have a BSc (Hons) degree and a wealth of marketing, public engagement and new business skills. None of the jobs suggested were flexible enough, at graduate level or what I wanted to do.

I have now decided that the only way I can work around my childcare responsibilities and my personal circumstances is Freelance.

My husband is at a senior level and is effectively on-call 24hrs by his company as he has no set hours or location. He can be called to meetings with limited notice, so it is very difficult to plan things and I have to function like a single parent often. I am sure this is the situation for many families with parents working in the private sector. Society and the private sector is just not set up for families and work/ life balance. At the end of the day, someone has to look after the children and be on-call 24/7 for their children, this still is mothers because of institutionalised sexism in our society.

The extent of pregnancy and maternity discrimination in Welsh public sector (and variances between difference groups of women), and examples of good practice. I have applied for several jobs in [REDACTED], I had one interview for a part-time receptionist. I didn't get the job as I didn't have enough experience. I am a graduate and have held many office and administrative posts. I find it hard to believe I didn't have enough experience. This is just an example of how easy it is for employers to discriminate against mothers with childcare responsibilities, they just don't recruit them by saying they don't have the required experience or qualifications. Institutionalised sexism can happen subtly and is often hidden from view or is hard to prove.

Many jobs are not advertised as being attractive to mothers or parents or available flexibly, a CCC HR Manager told me that any of their jobs could be asked to be done flexibly, but CCC don't advertise this anywhere, so how would people know this?

Public Sector organisations should be made to advertise a certain proportion of their jobs as flexible, job share or part-time and suitable for parents. This should include a certain proportion of senior level jobs too.