

PMW 01

Ymchwiliad i feichiogrwydd, mamolaeth a gwaith yng Nghymru

Inquiry into pregnancy, maternity and work in Wales

Ymateb gan: Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol Hywel Dda

Response from: Hywel Dda University Health Board

**Paragraph 1 – How the Welsh Government is taking action on the findings of the Equality and Human Rights Commission review into pregnancy and human rights discrimination**

**Response** – By signing up to the Equality and Human Rights Commission’s initiative on Working Forward on pregnancy and human rights, Welsh Government is acting as a role model for other organisations across Wales and encouraging them to sign up to this best practice initiative. This may work well in larger private organisations and public sector bodies, but smaller private and voluntary sector organisations may need more incentives and support to introduce good practice around pregnancy and maternity in the workplace, especially around introducing flexible working practices.

**Paragraph 2 – 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.**

**Response** – With the “This is me” initiative, the Welsh Government have gone some way to challenging gender stereotypical views, but could do more to encourage girls to undertake qualifications in areas where there is greater potential for higher income and where they are currently under-represented. The Equality and Human Rights Commission have produced a report “Fair Opportunities for All – a strategy to reduce pay gaps in Britain” which includes a series of recommendations for governments across Britain, which Welsh Government could consider adopting or endorsing as the basis for further action.

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/publication-download/fair-opportunities-all-strategy-reduce-pay-gaps-britain>

**Paragraph 3 – The extent to which the Welsh Government’s Economic Action Plan and employability programmes address issues faced by mothers**

**Response** - The aims of the Welsh Government’s employability programmes are ambitious in targeting “getting every aspect of Government - education, health, housing, communities, transport, rurality, childcare, regional development all working together to support people into sustainable employment.”<sup>1</sup> A streamlined and “joined up” approach is preferable to a piecemeal approach, but it will require sustained effort and commitment to make it bear fruit. There is a risk that if any one

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<sup>1</sup> Julie James Skills and Science Minister July 2017 , Welsh Government Website News

link in the chain is not sustained, it will be the most vulnerable who will fall through the gaps, and this may include mothers.

With two of the key priorities being identified as “...an all-age and a holistic approach, including bespoke and intensive support that is tailored to the needs of individuals in order to increase employability and address barriers” and “...a continuum of support to individuals once they access the workplace, particularly for those vulnerable to dropping out of employment”<sup>2</sup>; it would be hoped that the particular needs of mothers would be identified and addressed, including those who may experience socio-economic disadvantage and discrimination on the grounds of additional protected characteristics. The challenge is how Welsh Government will monitor the implementation of employability programmes in order to measure real progress and outcomes.

Through the Economic Action plan Welsh Government are aiming to introduce a new economic contract requiring businesses seeking Welsh Government support to commit to growth, fair work, reducing their carbon footprint and promoting health, up-skilling and learning in the work place. This would seem to be potentially beneficial to mothers. Also, with a drive to introduce and support more locally based business initiatives, this would assist mothers to gain employment closer to home with all associated benefits. Again, it would be important to ensure that consideration of the particular needs of women who experience socio-economic disadvantage and discrimination on the grounds of additional protected characteristics are also factored in to facilitate equal opportunity across the board.

#### **Paragraph 4 – Whether the new childcare offer is matched with targeted support for mothers to enter or return to work**

**Response** – Whilst the childcare offer may be beneficial to some working mothers, there is potential for some vulnerable families or low earners to be disadvantaged. The ability of families to take up the offer will be dependent on local availability of participating registered child care providers and their ability to offer care at the times that correspond with the needs of the working mothers eg. Unsociable shifts. Women who may prefer to use relatives to care for their children would not be able to take up the offer.

#### **Paragraph 5 - The extent of pregnancy and maternity discrimination in Welsh public sector ( and variances between different groups of women) and examples of good practice.**

The Hywel Dda University Health Board Maternity, Paternity and Adoption leave policy prescribes a streamlined approach to maternity leave and pay across all Health Boards in Wales. Under the terms of the policy, with the exception of staff who are on fixed term or temporary contracts of employment which have expired

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<sup>2</sup> Julie James, Skills and Science Minister Oral Statement 15, July 2016

during maternity leave, all employees have the right to return to work following maternity leave on the same terms and conditions of employment they received prior to the commencement of the maternity leave period. Where, during the maternity leave period, there are organisational changes which have implications for the continuation of the employee's job, the Health Board will provide the employee with suitable alternative employment in accordance with the Health Board's redeployment procedure.

Under the terms of the policy, if at the end of maternity leave an employee wishes to return to work on different hours the Health Board has a duty to facilitate this wherever possible, with the employee returning to work on different hours in the same job. If this is not possible the line manager must provide written, objectively justifiable reasons for this and employee should return to the same Band and work of a similar nature and status to that which they held prior to maternity absence. Where it is agreed that the employee will return to work on a flexible basis, including changed or reduced hours, for an agreed temporary period, this will not affect the employee's right to return to her job under their original contract at the end of the agreed period.

It is expected that all managers will implement the policy fairly and equitably. Within Hywel Dda University Health Board, we have not had any formal cases of grievances relating to pregnancy and maternity discrimination during the past year. However, it is recognised that there are sometimes issues where staff want to return to certain shift patterns that cannot be accommodated due to service needs, but every attempt is made to arrive at a mutually acceptable alternative.

Examples of good practice within Hywel Dda University Health Board include the following:-

Women who have recently returned to work following child birth are allowed paid time off for post-natal care e.g. attendance at health clinics.

If there is a request the Health Board will provide breast-feeding women with suitable rest facilities which include:

- ☐ A private and comfortable area where staff may be allowed time away from normal duties to express and store breast milk in order to maintain supply;
- ☐ Provision of dedicated fridge space for safe storage of expressed milk;
- ☐ Hand washing facilities.

The Health Board offers the following discounted Creche/Nursery facilities for staff:-

**[Brambly Hill Day Nursery, PPH](#)** | 01554 783435 | [hello@bramblyhill.co.uk](mailto:hello@bramblyhill.co.uk)

A perfect blend of early years care and learning, all under one roof, staffed by a full-time teacher (specialising in the early years) for the education element, and Nursery Nurses for the care offering the following benefits:

- \* A discount for all employees of Hywel Dda UHB
- \* Edenred Childcare Vouchers which are available through Hywel Dda UHB to be used at the Nursery. If both parents are employees, the allowance can be taken by each, thus potentially doubling the savings

- \* Open 8am until 6pm, but 7am starts are available on request
- \* Contract with 'Flying Start' - eligible children may be able to take their free funded hours at Brambly Hill as part of their full day care

[Little Angels Nursery Aberystwyth](#) - Little Angels is a full day care nursery registered with the CSSIW for 35 children aged 0-5 years. The nursery is conveniently situated in the town centre of Aberystwyth just a short distance from Bronglais Hospital and Aberystwyth University with parking within the grounds for dropping off and picking up by car and pushchair storage for those who walk in. Staff can take advantage of a 10% discount on our standard nursery fees

There are also crèche facilities available at Withybush General Hospital and Glangwili General Hospital.

### [Childcare Vouchers Salary Sacrifice Scheme](#)

The Government will be introducing a new scheme for Tax-Free Childcare for working families.

Families where both parents are working can claim up to £2,000 per child towards childcare costs.

Not everyone is eligible for the new scheme. Some families may benefit, others will lose out.

As the new scheme replaces the existing, Childcare Vouchers will remain open to those who are already participating, but closed to new entrants by April 2018.

It is more important than ever for parents to join the existing scheme as soon as they are eligible to make sure they have the choice between schemes come 2018.

Leave purchase scheme facilitating staff to buy additional leave to enable extra time off with family. [Leave Purchase Scheme](#)