Government responds to pregnancy and maternity discrimination report

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The Government has responded to the Women and Equalities Committee's report on pregnancy and maternity discrimination in the workplace.

The House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee released a report last year expressing concerns about the treatment of pregnant women and new mothers at work. The report stated that

the number of new and expectant mothers who had been forced to leave their jobs had almost doubled since 2005. It stated that "the situation is likely to decline further unless it is tackled effectively now", and called upon the Government to take urgent action.

The report set out a total of 21 recommendations for the Government to take forward. Among them were the following:

- extending the typical 3-month limitation date for bringing a Tribunal claim to 6 months for pregnancy-related discrimination cases;
- substantially reducing the Tribunal fees for pregnancy-related discrimination cases from the current total of £1,200 (which is the issue and hearing fees combined);
- giving women protection from redundancy for 6 months after returning from maternity leave; and
- assuring that protections for women would not be diminished due to the UK's vote to leave the EU.

The Government has since released its response to the report. At the outset it states that the Government takes the issue of pregnancy and maternity discrimination very seriously and that it is committed to tackling the problem. It also provided responses to the WEC's specific recommendations as follows:

- in relation to the limitation date, the Government did not see sufficient evidence to show that the 3-month time frame was acting as a barrier to women looking to bring tribunal claims. It noted that the Tribunal has the discretion to accept discrimination claims submitted after the limitation date where it is just and equitable to do so. However, it agreed to keep the matter under review.
- in the Government's separate review of the fee regime, it stated that the evidence suggests that the drop in pregnancy and maternity discrimination claims is lower than for other forms of discrimination. It therefore

could not see the case for singling out this kind of claim for special fees treatment.

- the Government agreed that the proportion of mothers being made redundant (which research suggests is 6%) is unacceptable. It therefore committed to consider means for ensuring that sufficient protection is afforded to pregnant women and new mothers.
- the Government assured that leaving the EU will not lead to a reduction in employment rights, and pointed to the fact that UK maternity rights already go further than the minimum prescribed by EU law.

Although the Government in its response has rejected a number of the WEC's recommendations, it did agree to look further into mothers' protections against redundancy, so further updates are expected in future.

[Government response to the House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee report on pregnancy and maternity discrimination](#)

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