

Parental pay

Sharing the joy

When she found out that new regulations on paid parental leave and pay did not apply to the self-employed, **Olga FitzRoy** founded the Campaign for Parental Leave Equality.

It was 2015, and self-employed recording and mix engineer Olga FitzRoy was expecting her first child. She and her partner, who was also self-employed, wanted to take advantage of the new rights to shared parental leave and shared parental pay as it made perfect sense for them. "But when I checked the regulations I was amazed to find out that self-employed people aren't eligible," she says.

The last straw was when a magazine asked how she balanced motherhood and career "and I went off on one. It isn't just a woman's job."

FitzRoy was not prepared to simply accept the situation and so she founded the Campaign for Parental Pay Equality. The Music Producers' Guild, of which she is a member, put her in touch with UK Music. They raised it with the Labour Party and then FitzRoy contacted the FEU unions including BECTU.

"I also raised it with Jo Swinson who as the Lib Dem Equalities Minister in the coalition government had brought in shared parental leave and pay in the Children and Families Act 2014. She said that they had wanted to extend it to self-employed workers but the Department for Work and Pensions were bringing in Universal Credit at the time and that would have made it complicated."

**Right: who gets to look after baby?
Below:
Olga FitzRoy**

Our businesses suffered as a result of not being able to break up the parental leave into blocks of childcare and work



FitzRoy continued lobbying aiming to win the agreement of all political parties. When the general election was called FitzRoy's campaign succeeded in getting shared parental pay for the self-employed into the Labour Party Manifesto. She attended the Enterprise Network Small Business GE2017 Debate and again raised the matter. Matthew Hancock for the Conservatives stuck to their policy position of awaiting recommendations from the Taylor Review, while Liberal Democrat Lord Palmer conceded that it "seems a good idea". The Green Party agreed

to support a change in legislation on this, while the Women's Equality Party went further than the campaign and were committed to a fully equal shared parental pay for nine months (total) at 90% for men and women, including the self-employed.

Self-employed workers who have heard about the campaign are supporting it. In a survey 57% agreed that their businesses suffered as a result of not being able to break up the parental leave into blocks of childcare and work.

You can contact the campaign at www.parentalpayequality.org.uk ●

Self-employed lose out under the law

The Campaign for Parental Pay Equality states that the current system of Maternity Allowance for the self-employed places the entire burden of childcare onto the mother, and offers no financial support for self-employed fathers or same-sex partners wanting to share some or all of the childcare. "Through research, advocacy and lobbying, we hope to change this inflexible piece of legislation to work for all parents."

Under current regulations, men and women on PAYE who are eligible can take up to 52 weeks of Shared Parental Leave (SPL) and get statutory Shared Parental Pay (ShPP) for 39 weeks of this. They can share

this between them in up to three separate blocks of leave each, (or more if the employer agrees). Currently men and women who are self-employed are not eligible for any ShPP whatsoever.

Women who are self-employed are ineligible for Statutory Maternity Allowance (SMA), paid for 39 weeks at the same rate as ShPP. This cannot be split into separate blocks, and if the woman comes off SMA in order to work in her business she cannot go back onto SMA.

There is currently no mechanism by which self-employed fathers (where they are not the sole carer) can claim financial

support for looking after their child, says the campaign. And self-employed mothers are penalised by an inflexible system that automatically looks to place all of the burden of childcare on the mother.

The campaign says: "We would like to see ShPP implemented for self-employed parents, as it would allow self-employed men and women more flexibility to successfully run their businesses without claiming any more money from the government than the mothers are currently entitled to."

For more details: <https://www.gov.uk/shared-parental-leave-and-pay/overview>