



One in every 20 new mothers in the workplace are made redundant during pregnancy, maternity leave or return to work. Many of these are discriminatory selection processes and many others are just plain unfair. Three quarters of new mothers experience some form of maternity discrimination at work and 54,000 women each year lose their jobs as a result.

In January 2017, the Government gave a commitment to review redundancy protections. Nine months later, women are still waiting for action.

We are calling for the UK to adopt the German model in which pregnant women and new mothers can only be made redundant in specified circumstances. This approach, recommended by the Women and Equalities Select Committee, would provide effective protection against the unfair treatment commonly experienced by pregnant women and new mothers.

Unfair redundancy is widespread

Redundancies which are not genuine – Women are made redundant in processes which are not really redundancies at all. Some employers think that calling a dismissal a redundancy means they can get rid of a pregnant woman or new mother without being accused of discrimination.

Stressful redundancy selection processes during pregnancy – Pregnant women are encouraged to reduce their stress levels to protect their health and the health of their babies. Despite this, employers can – and do – insist that women take part in demanding selection processes during pregnancy impacting on women's health and wellbeing.

Redundancies during maternity leave – Women on maternity leave who are facing redundancy should be offered a suitable alternative job without interview, if one is available. Many employers ignore this, leaving women without a job to return to.

Redundancy on return to work – Women have little protection in law against unfair redundancy on return to work. Many women are informed they are redundant a few weeks or months after returning from leave, often after poor treatment during pregnancy and maternity leave.

Taking action is difficult - Few women take action to challenge unfair redundancy or any other unfair treatment at work. Only 3% of new mothers who experience discrimination pursue a grievance and fewer than one in a hundred take a claim to the tribunal. Those women who do take legal action face a complex, time consuming, expensive and difficult process in order to obtain justice.

We need an alternative to complex legal claims - We need simple rules which are easy for women and their employers to understand. These rules should be consistent across pregnancy, maternity leave and return to work. The rules should apply to fathers and partners taking leave, as well as to mothers.

Urgent action is needed to end unfair redundancies

- Redundancies should be prohibited for women from pregnancy through to six months after return to work, except in specified circumstances.
- While this legislation is in development, the protections now in place for women on maternity leave should be extended to cover pregnancy through to six months after return to work. These require employers to offer women a suitable alternative job without interview, if a role is available.
- These protections for pregnant women and new mothers should be extended to fathers and partners taking paternity, shared parental and parental leave during pregnancy and their child's first year.

Support the campaign

- [Write to your MP](#) asking them to raise this with the Minister. This is the most effective campaign action you can take. Writing to your MP is simple to do. Have your postcode to hand, then follow [this link](#).
- [Join us](#) at our Parliamentary panel discussion 7 November.
- [Share your story](#) about unfair redundancies. We're keen to hear from women about what happened and the impact on them and their family.
- Share with friends and family through [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) to support the campaign. Fair treatment of mothers at work is everybody's business.
- If you are a member of a union or professional organisation, ask them to formally support the campaign.
- Sign up to our [contact list](#) and follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

You can find out more about unfair redundancies and new mothers in Maternity Action's research report: Unfair redundancies during pregnancy, maternity leave and return to work (we will be launching this on 7 November 2017).

[Please donate](#) to help us campaign for change.