

keeping mum



Fawcett
closing the inequality gap
women
since
1866



Keeping Mum

The government has set itself a target of eradicating child poverty by 2020. But they are keeping mum about the fact that having a baby in the UK puts women in danger of losing their job, moving into low-paid work and getting into debt.

Shhh....

Four out of ten children in poverty are in lone mum households.

A further three out of ten are in households where their dad works, but their mum is on low income or no income.

Mums are at greater risk of poverty in the UK than in any other western European country.

The reason?

From the moment they conceive a child, women face immediate financial penalties - thousands lose their jobs, and many more face disadvantage and reduced opportunities in the workplace.

After having a child, many mums become trapped in part-time, low-paid and low-status work. They are more likely to be in insecure jobs as temps or homeworkers.

We're calling on the government to stop keeping mum about the links between women's inequality and children's poverty, and to start taking action to support mums.

I haven't got a job to go back to....

because employers are **keeping mum** about maternity rights

Shhh...

30,000 women
every year
lose their jobs
as a result of
becoming
pregnant

Maria is a 32 year old single mum. When she became pregnant a year ago her employers were not pleased at the prospect of her taking maternity leave:

'They started putting extra pressure on me. When I was signed off sick by my doctor for three days with a virus, I was threatened with disciplinary action. My managers were unhelpful to the point that I felt that I was being bullied.

The added stress was affecting my health, and eventually I decided to leave. I moved into temping work, and my pay dropped from a salary of £27,000 to £5.85 per hour.

When my baby's a bit older, I'd like to go back to work. But I'd lose my benefits and have to pay for childcare – so overall I'd be receiving £40 less every week than I do now. If the temping work dried up, I'd have to wait for weeks to get back onto benefits – with no income. It's just not a risk I can afford to take.'

I'm struggling to make ends meet...

because the government's **keeping mum** about benefits



Shhh...

Two thirds
of people
on low
incomes
are women

Zoe is a mother of two who works from home:

'When my first son started school, I began working at home, packing small items such as screws into 'blister packs'. My health was not good at the time, and working from home meant that I was still able to hold down a job when I got ill, and I could fit things around my son's school hours.

I got about £3.10 per hour from homeworking, and the amount of work I got varied from week to week. On the best weeks I could make £70, on others I'd get no work.

The night before I had the baby, I was up working until 2am, trying to get a big order of packs finished. I gave birth the next day, and the company were phoning me two days after I got out of hospital. I had no right to maternity leave or pay, and there was certainly no flexibility from them. I couldn't afford to take time off.'

What needs to change?

We are calling on the government to bring in specific measures to tackle maternity discrimination and enable mothers to claim their rights in the workplace.

We need:

- **Protection:**
Stronger laws to stop pregnant women losing their jobs.
- **Fair Pay:**
Increasing maternity entitlements to the same level as the minimum wage.
- **Transparency:**
Introducing mandatory pay audits for all organisations.
- **Support:**
Increasing the number of hours mothers can work without losing their benefits from four to sixteen.
- **Rights:**
Equal treatment for temporary and agency workers.



Don't **keep mum** any longer...

What you can do:

- Tear off and send the postcard in this booklet to Gordon Brown, asking him to make tackling mothers' poverty a priority.
- Sign up to the campaign mailing list: email ellie.cumbo@fawcettsociety.org.uk or call 020 7253 2598.
- Go to www.fawcettsociety.org.uk for more campaign actions.

THE FAWCETT SOCIETY CAMPAIGNS FOR:



- **Economic Rights:**
Women's right to fair pay and fair treatment in the workplace.
- **Political Rights:**
Women's right to a powerful voice in decision making.
- **Social Rights:**
Women and men to break free from stereotypes.
- **Bodily Rights:**
Women's freedom from violence, harassment and objectification.

Unite is the UK's largest trade union with over two million members working in every sector of the industry.

Unite campaigns to end discrimination against women. Workers should be paid fairly regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnic or national origin, creed or disability.

For more information on Unite equality campaigns including Keeping Mum, or to join Unite, visit: www.amicustheunion.org



One parent families
GINGERBREAD
making change happen



**CHILD
POVERTY
ACTION
GROUP**



I'M NOT
keeping
mum
ANY LONGER

