

# Funding announced to create modern, family friendly workplaces



A new initiative launched today (Wednesday) by families charities has secured funding to get a fairer deal for working parents and help more fathers to balance work and family life.

Fathers Network Scotland, Parenting across Scotland and Working Families have been awarded £100,000 from the Scottish Government for the initiative to create more family friendly workplaces where parents and carers are supported to work flexibly.

The new funding was announced today by Scotland's Minister for Children and Young People Aileen Campbell as she launched the Family Friendly Working Scotland programme at an event held in Edinburgh to outline what new flexible working laws will mean for employers.

The new Family Friendly Working Scotland programme will raise awareness about flexible working, conduct research and for the first time fund a dedicated coordinator to work directly with employers in Scotland to support parents at work.

It will also see the launch of new Scottish Top Employers for Working Families awards, designed to promote a family-friendly Scotland in the field of employment.

New UK legislation that comes into effect in June will see the extension of the right to request flexible working to all employees. From 2015 parents will have a right to shared leave.

Research shows that mainly women request flexible working but

more fathers would request it if they knew it was accepted by their co-workers.) More than a third of men questioned in a recent UK wide study said they worked full-time and were offered no flexibility at all by their employers. The study also found that 80% of mothers feel “guilty” about going back to work after having children.

The new funding will allow research to be carried out into challenges faced by Scottish families, in particular by fathers. A recent report by Fathers Network Scotland (FNS) highlighted a lack of Scottish data.

As well as the forthcoming UK legislation, the Scottish Government’s National Parenting Strategy commits to making Scotland’s workplaces more family friendly.

Family friendly working policies also benefit employers. Falling absenteeism and higher retention leads to a reduction in costs – 65 per cent of employers said flexible working practices had a positive effect on recruitment and retention, helping employers save money on recruitment, induction and training.

David Drysdale, Founder & Chair, Fathers Network Scotland said: “Fathers’ voices are often unheard at work when it comes to family friendly working. Men are less likely to request flexible working, and if they do, are less likely to get it. Fathers don’t use many of the family friendly initiatives that are available because they’re not aware of them and more often than not, because they think their colleagues or employers wouldn’t take them seriously, and there is an outdated assumption that family friendly working means part time working is only something that mothers need. However, we know that they too want to combine work with family life. This new partnership will address this and ensure that father’s voices are heard in the workplace.”

Clare Simpson, Parenting Across Scotland (PAS) Project

Manager, said: "Our partners work with thousands of families across Scotland, many of whom feel the conflict between work and home life sharply. The new partnership aims to ease that conflict by working to bridge the chasm that exists between the legislation and what happens in reality so that for example, parents aren't scared to ask for parental leave, or time off to care for a sick child. A real family friendly work ethic in Scotland would benefit parents and employers alike in so many ways."

Launching the funding and programme of work today, Minister for Children and Young People Aileen Campbell, said, "I'm very aware of the challenges that many parents face in balancing commitments at home and at work. In addition to measures such as funded early learning and childcare, the Scottish Government recognises the importance of flexible working in helping parents and carers to manage those twin responsibilities. We're committed to working with employers to explore ways of promoting and supporting flexible working so I'm delighted that we are able to support this important new initiative."

Sarah Jackson, Chief Executive, Working Families said, "I am delighted that Working Families has been invited to be involved in this wide-ranging programme of work with two of Scotland's leading family charities to enable Scottish employers and families to benefit from more family friendly working."