

The idea of paid parental leave is an important one. I feel that the most important step in this process is not the actual amount (as pointed out, it's not much more than current benefits) but instead the 'normalising' of taking time off to care for children.

With regards to paternity leave - I believe that the idea of a father being able to take the 18 weeks is a good one, AND the additional 2 weeks if the mother hasn't taken leave, or just 2 weeks even if the father has taken leave is a strong message that fathers should be involved in parenting. The movement of our society towards women bearing children AND returning to work so quickly is putting an incredible amount of pressure on women and I see the toll it is taking on their ability to provide the best care for their children.

The idea of employers paying the leave and then claiming this as a deduction on Instalment Activity / Business Activity Statements seems to be a very smooth and easy to administer option.

In the Child Care Industry, there is a high proportion of staff in the child-bearing age range / stage. As pointed out, the increase will be an average of 3% of staffing costs, however, this will have a higher impact in our industry. Although employers like me will be able to see the benefits with regards to attracting and retaining staff, be aware that child care centres may use this as a reason to increase fees for parents. Other similarly staffed industries may have similar issues. In our industry though, parents might be a bit more supportive of the increase in fees, as it's all related to children?

All in all, I'm a big supporter of this proposal.