

LETTERS



JOHN HARRIS/REPORTDIGITAL.CO.UK

ADOPTION LEAVE

It is re-assuring to know that the new Maternity Policy including Adoption Leave has been forwarded to the National Joint Council for negotiation. BUT WHAT ABOUT NOW??

There is a significant increase of individuals and couples within the Fire Service taking the decision to adopt a child which can be a difficult, stressful and lengthy process, and they should be given full and supportive consideration by their employers.

Although not ideal, a policy of sorts is in place for adoption leave in some Brigades in some Regions. However, the majority of Brigades in the U.K. fail comprehensively to recognise the rapidly increasing necessity for such leave.

The yearning and natural instinct to have a child for most women is immense. In some instances, very often, when after years of failed attempts with, IVF and other fertility treatments proves fruitless, adoption is the only option left.

For Brigades to refuse reasonable leave for adoption is an open act of discrimination against the mother, simply because she is not the biological bearer of her child.

This is unfair, immoral and totally unacceptable.

In our Grey Book Conditions of Service, it states that 5 days paid leave can be granted for an employee wishing to adopt a

child. In addition, unpaid leave can be granted in accordance with the Parental Leave Policy, also set out in the Grey Book. This is a "minimum" requirement only and should not be adopted as "the norm".

The adoption of an infant should be given the same parity with that of a maternal mother. Post-natally, time is required for "bonding and settling-in" into the new and extended family unit. This is also the case for the adoptive parents and infant. There are many other stresses and relationship problems which are associated with adoption, particularly for instance the inter-country adoption.

As a natural mother myself, I can only stand back and admire the couples going through the trauma and invasive procedures of adoption.

Brigades who fail to recognise, or respect, the prospective adoptive parents in their employ are totally unjust.

The new Maternity Policy approved by the N.J.C., is still some way away from implementation. We can only hope in the interim that every Fire Service employee who applies for adoption leave is treated fairly and with the consideration every new mother deserves.

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