

Press Release

For immediate release  
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**IoD calls for Government 'time-out' on maternity rights**

The Government should take a 'time-out' before pushing ahead with any further extension of maternity rights, the Institute of Directors (IoD) said today.

Commenting on the current debate over maternity rights, the IoD pointed out that maternity leave issues feature heavily in its latest set of red tape case studies from IoD members.

The IoD dossier, *In Their Own Words: red tape case studies from IoD members*, gives first-hand accounts of a series of problems encountered by businesses as a result of maternity leave situations. The issues are particularly acute for small companies. Typical problems include:

- \* Difficulty in finding adequate temporary cover for employees on maternity leave - especially when the absent employee plays a specialised role in the business. Potential employees with high skill levels may be reluctant to take a temporary contract.
- \* Employees failing to give a clear indication of when they intend to return to work.
- \* Business development stalled while R&D staff take maternity leave.
- \* Employees requesting flexible working arrangements on return from maternity leave, leaving the employer reluctant to put more staff on non-standard hours, but wary of the consequences of refusing the request.

The IoD's Head of Regulatory Affairs, James Walsh, said:

"Responsible employers recognise that maternity rights are an important part of a fair deal for employees. The problem is that the balance has swung too far against the employer.

"The IoD does not support calls for abolition of maternity rights - far from it. But we are concerned that the Government is thinking of extending these rights even further after 2006. Business is still getting to grips with the last upheaval.

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"We want Government to take a 'time-out' on the whole package of family-friendly employment law until 2010 at least. Business needs a prolonged period of no change so that it can get on with generating wealth and creating jobs."

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Notes to editors

1. The IoD (Institute of Directors) was founded in 1903 and obtained a Royal Charter in 1906. The IoD is a non-party political organisation with upwards of 54,000 members in the United Kingdom. Membership includes directors from right across the business spectrum - from media to manufacturing, e-business to the public and voluntary sectors. Members include CEOs of large corporations as well as entrepreneurial directors of start-up companies.

2. The IoD offers a wide range of business services which include business centre facilities (including six regional centres), conferences, networking events, issues-led guides and literature as well as information services and free access to a comprehensive business library and enquiry service. The IoD places great emphasis on director development and has established a certified qualification for directors - Chartered Director - as well as running specific board-level and director-level training and individual career mentoring programmes.

3. In addition, the IoD provides an effective voice to represent the interests of its members to government and key opinion-formers at the highest levels. These include ministers, constituency MPs, Select Committee members and senior civil servants. IoD policies and views are actively promoted to the national, regional and trade media.

4. For further information, visit our website: <http://www.iod.com>