

Keira Knightley blasts 'archaic' maternity law and 'shocking' cost of childcare ^[1]

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Source: The Telegraph

Format: Article

Publication Date: 31 Oct 2016

AVAILABILITY

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EXCERPTS

Keira Knightley, the actress, has attacked Britain's "archaic" maternity laws, saying the "shocking" cost of childcare means women are struggling to return to work.

Knightley, who welcomed her first daughter Edie in 2015, said she had become "unbelievably aware" of the difficulties faced by women who want to return to their careers after childbirth.

The actress, star of *Love Actually*, *Atonement* and *The Imitation Game*, said mothers are too often left "desperately trying to figure it out" when it comes to childcare, arguing it is time for the laws to change.

Admitting she has the wealth and privilege to access "really good childcare", Knightley said she would otherwise have had to take four years out of a career just to get by.

She has now called for change to make paternity leave equal to maternity, as she warns employers are still likely to discriminate against women.

In an interview with *Harper's Bazaar*, the actress said: "I think paternity leave should be the same as maternity leave.

"It's shocking. Because you need that option.

"And actually, when you're thinking about an employer looking at a man and a woman thinking, 'Well, at some point you could take nine months or however long off, and the guy doesn't have to.'

"Don't tell me that that doesn't come into it!

"You need to be a family unit, not just have the guy there for two weeks and then go back to work and the mother left desperately trying to figure it out.

"I think it's archaic that there aren't better options."

Knightley, who married musician James Righton in 2013, said her husband is "incredibly supportive", with their toddler daughter now displaying the energy of a "ballistic missile".

The actress is to be honoured with a Theatre Icon award at the *Harper's Bazaar Women of the Year Awards* in London on Monday evening.

In an interview to accompany it, Knightley took the opportunity to rail against the issues facing working mothers across the country.

"One of the things that is so shocking in this country is that childcare is unbelievably expensive.

"It should be, it's an amazing thing if you're good at it. It's incredibly difficult, it should be well paid.

"But there is no option for a woman to go back to work unless she's being paid really, really well and can afford full-time care before [her child can] get into nursery."

She said of her own experience of motherhood: "I think I've become unbelievably aware of that and how lucky I've been to be able to afford really good childcare, because otherwise it would be at least four years out of my career.

"I wouldn't be able to get back to where I'd been if I'd taken four years out.

"I think that's the same for most women. And I think that's really hard."

When asked about her "post-baby body", Knightley said she decided to reject the narrative of celebrity mothers spring "back into shape"

immediately.

"I actually went completely the opposite," she said. "I went, 'f---that, I'm not putting that pressure on myself in any way.'

"So it's taken me a long time to get back into my jeans. I'm nearly there."

The actress, who rose to fame in Bend It Like Beckham before taking roles in Pride and Prejudice, The Duchess and Never Let Me Go, has recently taken her first role on Broadway in Thérèse Raquin.

"I'm very ambitious and totally ambivalent at exactly the same time," she told the magazine. "I do periods where I work a lot and then...it has to go to absolute nothingness."

-reprinted from The Telegraph

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