

# Ministers banned from shared parental leave <sup>[1]</sup>

Business Minister and expectant father Andrew Griffiths goes on radio to promote shared parental leave but reveals members of the Government are BANNED from taking up the policy

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**Source:** Daily Mail

**Format:** Article

**Publication Date:** 11 Feb 2018

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## EXCERPTS

A Business Minister in charge of persuading couples to take up shared parental leave has revealed he is barred from taking part in the scheme.

Andrew Griffiths, who is expecting his first child with his wife Kate in April, toured the radio studios today to plug the scheme.

But he said that he is not allowed to take shared parental leave because Government ministers are banned from doing so.

The embarrassing admission comes as the Government embarks on a major publicity blitz to encourage more men to take up the offer to share the 50 weeks of parental leave with their other half.

It comes after fresh figures show that take up of the scheme could be as low as two per cent.

Mr Griffiths, who became small business minister in the January reshuffle, said that as 'an office holder rather than an employee' he cannot take up the offer.

He told the Emma Barnett Show on BBC 5 Live: 'Ministers aren't allowed to. But I think I am going to be the first-ever minister responsible for maternity and paternity to take their full allocation of paternity.

'I've already told my office that I'm taking two weeks off.'

The surprised host replied: 'Hang on a minute. Back up a second.

'You've just come on the radio to promote shared parental leave, and you're in a job where the rules could be changed because you are the rule-makers - where you are not allowed to take shared parental leave.'

But Mr Griffiths said that while he had discussed the policy with his wife he had not given much thought to the fact he is banned from it.

He said: 'I have to admit to you that it's not even something that I had thought about. It's not my priority.

'My priority is to focus on how we can deliver a policy that works for hundreds of thousands people.'

But he said he would 'certainly take it away' and consider the issue.

Mr Griffiths announced he is expecting his first child with a tweet of a photograph of a bun baking in an oven back in October.

Under the scheme, parents can share up to 50 weeks of leave and 37 weeks of pay after having a baby.

Parents can take it off in up to three separate blocks, or sharing the time to have up to six months off together

Parents can spend up to six months together at home, but while 285,000 couples are eligible for the scheme just two per cent have taken up the offer.

Shared parental leave was introduced in 2015 in a bid to help mothers return to work and get fathers to spend more time with their newborn.

The Business department has launched a 'share the joy' campaign to plug the policy on social media, TV and trains.

The Government is spending £1.5million on an advertising campaign to try to increase take up of the policy.

- reprinted from Daily Mail

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