



THE BRITISH AIRLINE PILOTS  
ASSOCIATION CAMPAIGNING FOR  
FAIRER MATERNITY PAY IN AIRLINES



# INTRODUCTION

For women, the viability and attractiveness of a career as a pilot is significantly affected by the ability to balance working as a pilot with maternity and childcare commitments. This is a multi-faceted subject which raises questions about flexible working, rostering and the role of fathers. At its most fundamental level, however, lies the issue of maternity pay. The financial support available to a woman following the birth of her child has a major influence on the decisions that she will make, the consequences of which will be present for an entire career.

In late 2017, a small group of women pilots came together, with the assistance of the British Airline Pilots Association (BALPA), to campaign for an improvement to the amount of maternity pay paid to women pilots. This group now comprises of approximately one third of the women pilot community. They are all committed to encouraging more women to become pilots. However, they are united in the belief that the current level of maternity pay available is grossly inadequate, causes significant hardship to women seeking to balance their careers with their family lives, and presents a major disincentive to women considering a career as a pilot. BALPA now seeks to address this problem.



## THE REALITIES

The standard rate of statutory maternity pay set by the government for weeks seven to 39 of maternity leave is currently **£145.18**. For many pilots, this will represent a reduction in the normal take-home pay of 80-90%

Many of the hardships associated with an 80-90% reduction in pay are obvious, particularly those which coincide with the extra expenditure involved in preparing for a new baby. Consultation with members of the maternity group highlighted that many women pilots are the highest earners within their families – the traditional ‘breadwinner’ role. Some are single parent families. Increasingly, women pilots are also servicing debt from the costs of higher education and flight training, along with saving for the costs of buying a first house.



# THE REAL-LIFE STORIES

## PILOT A

“ Following a recent routine appointment, my GP told me she suspected I was pregnant, and I was referred for an ultrasound. In the week between the shock announcement and the scan, my boyfriend and I started planning what we would/could do. We were excited, and very much want children at some stage, but hadn't planned on it happening so soon! However, upon researching maternity

pay, we were horrified to discover we would have to move out of the home we are renting, if I were to have the time off after pregnancy that we desired.

Ultimately we found ourselves debating whether it would be better to keep the baby and move out of the home we have just settled in to, desperately saving every penny we could in the next



nine months and relying on help from parents or have an abortion and spend a few years figuring out a financial plan that would enable us to keep our home, remain financially independent and raise a family with the time off from work we both desire.

Fortunately, the scan proved it was a false alarm. Nevertheless, many tears were shed, and I still don't know what

the best thing to do would be: lose our home and deal with a 90% pay cut, or terminate the pregnancy. An improvement to the maternity package could prevent others from facing such a situation in future.

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**“Ultimately we found ourselves debating whether it would be better to keep the baby and move out of the home we have just settled in to, or have an abortion and spend a few years figuring out a financial plan”**

## THE REAL-LIFE STORIES



**“The current maternity package does not encourage women into aviation and in my case is stopping me from having the freedom to start a family when I am ready.”**

### “PILOT B

I’m about to return to work after having my first child. When I joined the airline my husband and I realised that starting a family would need to wait until a substantial amount of money could be saved to cover my earnings lost during maternity leave. Between us we saved over £15,000 to ensure I could take the full year off with our son.

We’re now starting to look to the future and unfortunately will need to start the process of saving again before even thinking about having another child. The extreme drop in pay to statutory maternity pay has been a barrier to us extending our family when we wanted to. It has added a lot of pressure to

our home situation and changed the path of many of our life decisions.

I went to an all-girls school and despite having no encouragement from them decided to follow my dream of becoming a pilot. I went back and spoke to a few students before I was pregnant to tell them how much I enjoyed my job. If I went back again I would definitely still say the same but would have to answer honestly if they asked about family life. The current maternity package does not encourage women into aviation and in my case is stopping me from having the freedom to start a family when I am ready.

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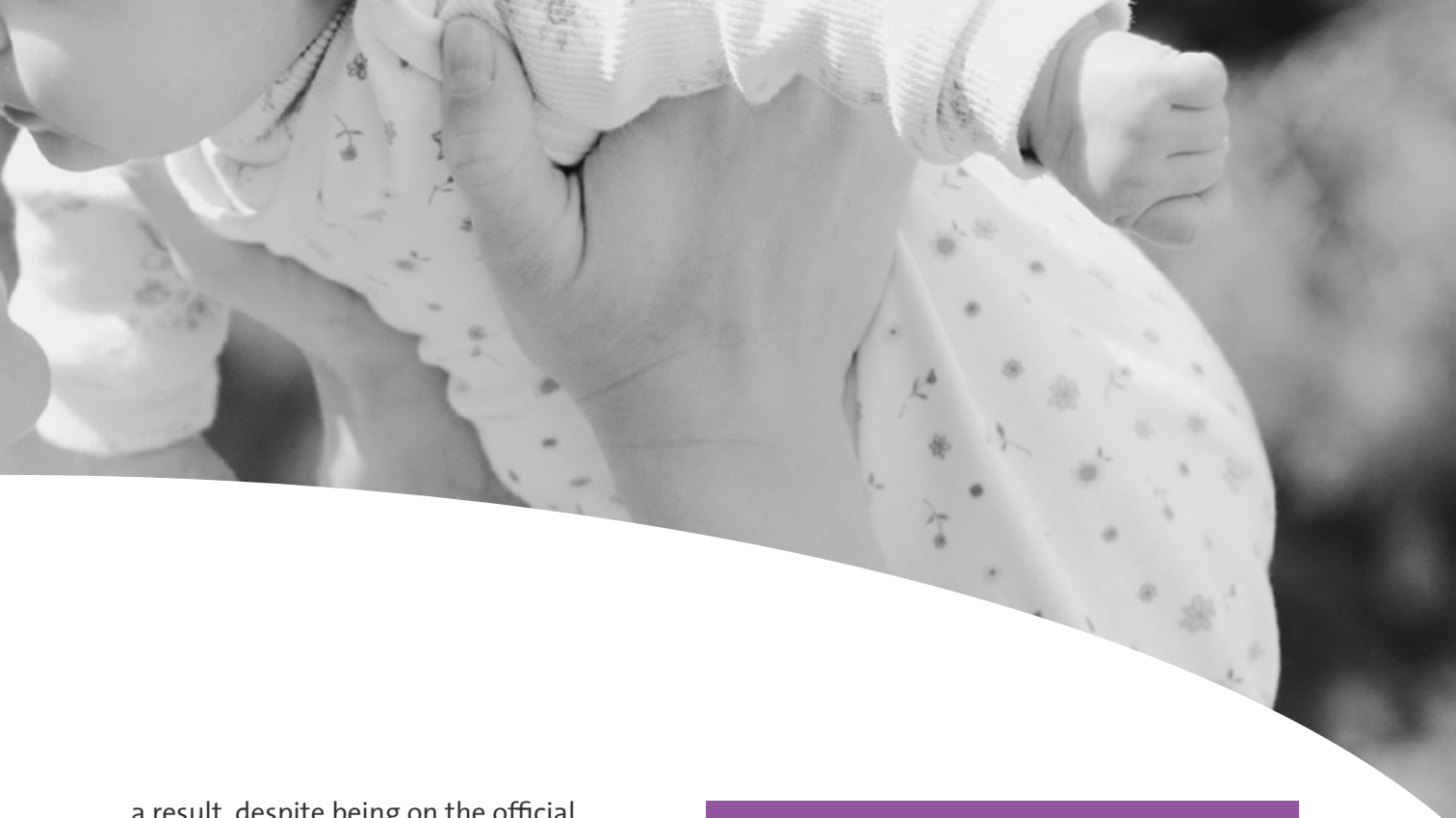
## PILOT C

I joined the airline on a cadet scheme. To finance my training, I took out a £90,000 loan (to cover a training bond of £84,000 plus living expenses for two to three years). My monthly repayments are currently £1,062, and this could go up as it varies with the Bank of England base rate (it previously peaked at £1,350).

I am fortunate that the cadet scheme includes a monthly training bond repayment that covers most of my loan.

I believe that this payment is based on continued employment with my airline and would therefore continue through maternity. However, the airline only refunds the basic training bond cost, excluding living expenses and interest. This will leave me with approximately a £20,000 shortfall, and nearly two years of loan repayments not met by the airline, very affordable in full-time employment. However, the statutory maternity provision is less than half my loan repayment. As





a result, despite being on the official training scheme, I could end up nearly £600-850 per month in deficit (before rent/bills/childcare) should I take maternity leave during that time. This is simply unaffordable, and I don't believe is adequate recognition that pilots incur significant financial penalties in order to obtain a licence, and will still be feeling the effects nearly 10 years later.

**“The statutory maternity provision is less than half my loan repayment.”**

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# THE CURRENT AIRLINE MATERNITY PROVISION

Airline	Maternity Pay
AirTanker	<b>Enhanced</b> 18 weeks at 100% basic pay 8 weeks at 50% basic pay
Ascent Helicopters	<b>Statutory Minimum</b> (6 weeks at 90%, 33 weeks at statutory rate)
BMI Regional	<b>Statutory Minimum</b> (6 weeks at 90%, 33 weeks at statutory rate)
Bristow	<b>Statutory Minimum</b> (6 weeks at 90%, 33 weeks at statutory rate)
British Airways	<b>Statutory Minimum</b> (6 weeks at 90%, 33 weeks at statutory rate)
CHC Scotia	<b>Statutory Minimum</b> (6 weeks at 90%, 33 weeks at statutory rate)
Cobham AV. S	<b>Statutory Minimum</b> (6 weeks at 90%, 33 weeks at statutory rate)

<b>DHL</b>	<b>Enhanced</b> Week 1-6 – 100% average weekly pay Week 7-18 – 100% of basic weekly pay 19-39 weeks Statutory pay
<b>easyJet</b>	<b>Enhanced</b> 6 weeks at 90% pay 12 weeks at 50% of basic salary Remainder at Statutory pay
<b>Flybe</b>	<b>Statutory Minimum</b> (6 weeks at 90%, 33 weeks at statutory rate)
<b>Loganair</b>	<b>Statutory Minimum</b> (6 weeks at 90%, 33 weeks at statutory rate)
<b>Norwegian/OSM</b>	<b>Statutory Minimum</b> (6 weeks at 90%, 33 weeks at statutory rate)
<b>SAS CAE/Parc</b>	<b>Statutory Minimum</b> (6 weeks at 90%, 33 weeks at statutory rate)
<b>Thomas Cook</b>	<b>Enhanced</b> (6 weeks at 100% of average weekly earnings (AWE), 20 weeks at 50% of AWE, statutory rate for 13 weeks and bonus payment [4 weeks' pay])
<b>TUI</b>	<b>Statutory Minimum</b> (6 weeks at 90%, 33 weeks at statutory rate)
<b>Virgin</b>	<b>Statutory Minimum</b> (6 weeks at 90%, 33 weeks at statutory rate)



# MATERNITY PAY IN THE FTSE 100

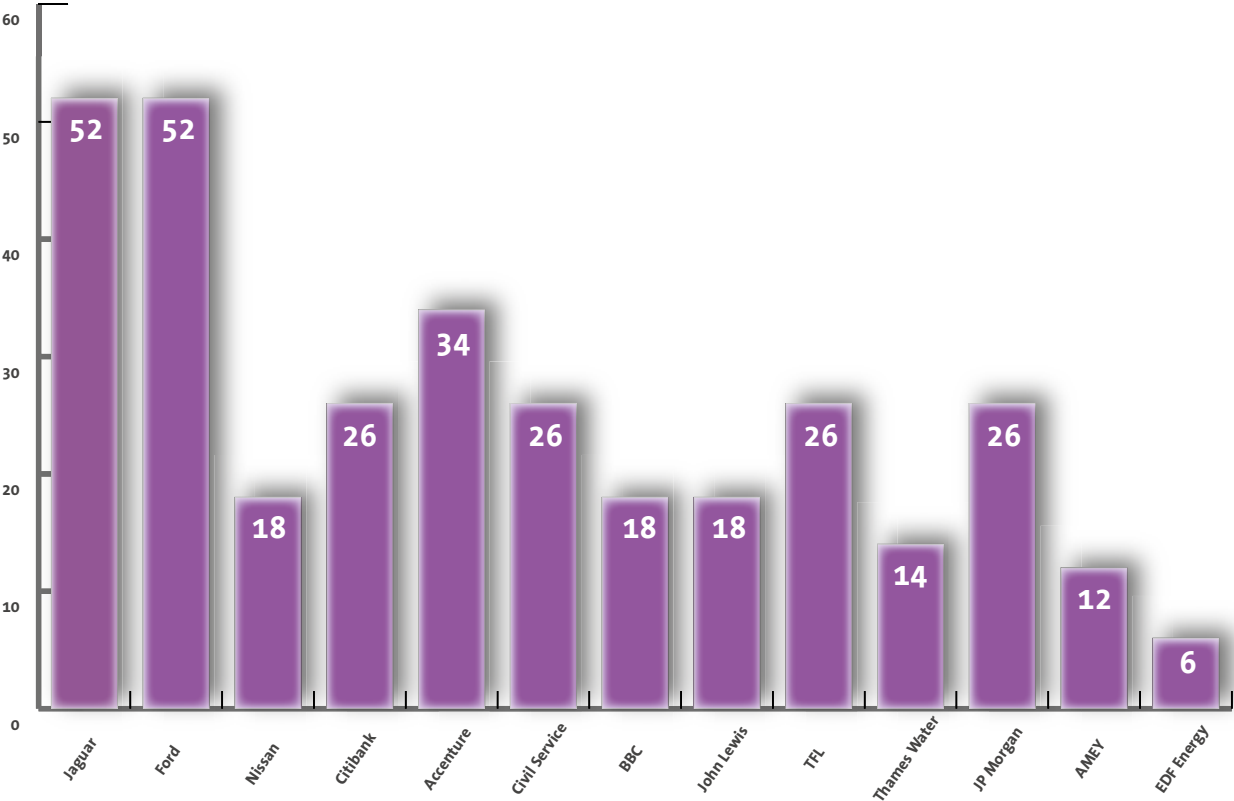
Number of weeks at 100% pay





# MATERNITY PAY IN BRITISH BUSINESSES

Number of weeks at 100% pay





The following is proposed as a model for enhanced maternity pay package for pilots (however, this may differ from airline to airline given different pilot needs):

Women on maternity leave should receive full pay for the first 26 weeks of their maternity leave and half pay for the remainder of their statutory maternity leave.

The level of full pay and half pay should be calculated by reference to the individual pilot's average pay over the 12 months prior to that pilot being removed from flying duties having declared themselves to be pregnant.

This represents a fair proposal by reference to other large employers in the UK. It is in line with the pay offered by comparable professional employers in other industries while enabling companies to present an industry-leading maternity pay package within the UK aviation industry. This will benefit women pilots by allowing them to have children earlier in their careers and by reducing the financial hardship associated with having children.

The benefits to airlines in adopting this proposal include being seen to lead the airline industry in enhancing maternity pay, taking a decisive step to address the gender pay gap which has previously been identified as largely attributable to pilots, and ultimately encouraging more women to become pilots.







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