

Couple are hoping for wheels of fortune

A COUPLE from County Durham have bounced back from the jolt of unemployment by setting up their own tyre-fitting franchise.

Jeremy and Victoria Valentine both have an interest in motor vehicles, but were in different careers until IT sales manager Jeremy lost his job a year ago. The pair settled on the idea of setting up a North East outpost of national mobile tyre-fitting business Etyres.co.uk from their Beamish home, fixing punctures and replacing tyres and batteries from Durham to Northumberland.

Victoria said: "My husband was away, and I got a flat tyre. To be honest, at the time I didn't know what to do. I had a newborn and a toddler and I couldn't go anywhere. The idea of having someone to come to the house and change the tyre seemed logical to us. It was a proven business model in the south."

The couple launched the business with funding help from Natwest in April after undergoing training with Etyres. The mobile service can reach the customer at home or work, and the couple are hoping to snap up a second van after a few months.

Victoria said: "My husband's really into motorbikes and I love classic cars, so this sort of area is something we're both interested in. I used to work as a marketing manager before I went on maternity leave, and while I was away the business was bought out and they wanted to change my hours and place of work. Jeremy was finding it hard to find similar work to his previous job because it was so specialist."

"We can now run the business from home, and fit it around the kids and our lifestyle."



BOUNCING BACK Jeremy and Victoria Valentine have set up an Etyres franchise from their home in Beamish.

Flexible working plans 'will hit small firms'

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PLANS to introduce more flexible working rights for both parents and other employees will hit small firms hard, according to the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB).

It is concerned that the Government

changes that would allow both parents to take off time in chunks, rather than in one block, which the FSB said would make the administration of leave much more difficult for smaller businesses.

It said that introducing 'one size fits all' regulations would not work for smaller firms and is preparing its submission to the Government's consultation on the proposed changes.

and workloads for a member of staff that has decided to take chunks of parental leave from work – not a continuous period of time – will be extremely burdensome and difficult to administer.

"Small businesses already provide flexible working for their employees and so we would urge the Government not to formalise this process as it would just add to the red tape burden

that parents needed flexible leave. It was essential that staff spoke to employers up front to allow them to plan more effectively.

The Government is also planning to consult on extending the right to request flexible working to all employees.

The FSB says that around two-thirds of small firms already offer it and just 4% restrict this to staff who