



The parental leave experience

Having a family can be a career derailer for women. To ensure that women remain in the pipeline, it is critical that parental leave is well managed to maximise the potential for women to return to work.

By demonstrating that having a family and career is not incompatible, an organisation is more likely to retain talented female employees.

It is not simply enough to have a policy in place, it is crucial to have a workplace where people feel valued and supported.

Having a clear and consistently applied process results in smoother transitions with no need to reinvent the wheel each time.

It is not simply enough to have a policy in place, it is crucial to have a workplace where people feel valued and supported.



Parental leave best practice



Parental leave policies that are equally available to both men and women

- Ensure that language is gender neutral
- Easy to understand with clearly communicated and accessible information

Flexible in application

- Empower parents to take parental leave as it suits their circumstances
- Enable opportunities to take it in a chunk or use it to work part-time over a set period

Actively encouraged and incentivised

- Have a workplace culture that supports conversations about taking parental leave and returning from parental leave for both men and women
- Identify blocks, stigmas and attitudes that prevent men taking parental leave
- Adequately compensate both men and women who take parental leave

How does your organisation stack up?

What are people's experience of parental leave really like? Use this checklist to identify potential sticking points and how you can improve things.

Pre-parental leave



- Do you have a clear and easily accessible parental leave policy?
- Can people easily and discreetly find information about your parental leave policy, their entitlements and requirements?
Utilise your intranet to hold all the relevant details and forms in one place.
- Do they understand the information?
 - Use clear language not legalese
 - Have a contact or helpline for people to ask questions
- Does the policy equally apply to men and women?
 - Ensure any language is gender neutral
- Do their managers understand the information and how to apply it?
 - Ensure people leaders are aware of the organisational policy and encourage people to use it
- Are managers confident to plan for people in their team taking parental leave?
 - Do they understand what options are open to them to cover the role?
 - Do they understand the requirements and expectations of both the organisation and the team member?
- Do women feel comfortable telling their managers that they are pregnant/plan to adopt?
- Are managers confident having conversations with people about parental leave?

During parental leave



- How much communication with employees on parental leave is desirable?
 - Do employees and their managers know what this is and how to achieve it?
 - Is there an opportunity for the employee to decide on the level of interaction?
- Are employees on parental leave entitled to performance or remuneration reviews?
 - Do managers understand how to implement and apply this?
- How do managers and employees plan for a return to work?
 - How far in advance of the return date is contact desired?
 - Are keeping in touch days planned and used?

Post parental leave



- Do employees and their managers understand what is expected upon return from parental leave?
 - Is there an opportunity for a phased return to work, to work part-time or flexibly?
 - Do employees and their managers feel comfortable having these discussions?
- Are there any set expectations about using leave for a sick child?
- Are there any practices to assist the employee settle back into work?
 - Regular check-ins with their manager
 - A 'buddy' who has returned from parental leave within the previous twelve months