

# Family friendly and flexible workplaces

Best practice guide  
for employers

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## Foreword from Lloyd's

There's no such thing as a 'typical family' construct any more. Families have evolved to become richer and more complex than ever. Single parents, shared parental leave, same sex marriage, adoption, surrogacy and step kids, older parents with the dual caring responsibilities of young children and their own ageing parents, terminal care leave - and that's just the beginning.

Against this backdrop of social change and digital advances, family friendly organisations are working hard to stay one step ahead, creating new policies and initiatives that make time for the demands of the wider family, not just parents.

The business case is proven: Flexibility is becoming one of the most highly valued attributes of any role, and the organisations who respond accordingly feel the benefit in terms of talent attraction, productivity and retention.

This report is both a guide to benchmark best practice among the most progressive organisations and a practical summary of what you need to consider when formulating your own policies and embedding your own practice. It offers data points to help convince the flexibility sceptics and arm the agile working activists.

We are proud to be associated with this report and would like to acknowledge the important and influential work of Working Families in helping to shape employer progress.

### Pauline Miller

Head of Talent Development & Inclusion,  
Lloyd's

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## Family friendly: why it matters

Why does family friendly working matter? Put simply it is about a way of thinking and doing work in a way that makes sense for businesses today. It's about making work *work* for everyone involved and making sure that people's talents are used to their fullest extent. Family friendly is about family in its widest sense, however that family is formed - anyone who has outside responsibilities, commitments or interests they want to balance with their working lives. It is not just about parents.

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Family friendly, flexible working is already the norm in many industries, and is becoming more and more common, particularly in the service sector.

- Family friendly working is now mainstream business practice, across sectors and all sizes of company, improving both the lives of their employees and organisational performance.
- Family friendly policies are not just about flexible working practices but include developing and enhancing provisions for parents and carers. For many companies pregnancy can often be the trigger to think about family friendly working: not only how to approach maternity leave, but how to ensure a successful return to work in the short and long term.
- For business, it is not enough to comply with legislation. Employers who aren't family friendly are finding themselves left behind, both in terms of being an employer of choice and in business agility.
- There is no one size fits all solution. Each individual company will have a different starting place: from supporting a pregnant employee, to thinking about phased retirement. Some will be beginning from scratch, whilst others might have some limited policies in place that require development.
- Developing the organisation's culture, and winning hearts and minds is perhaps the hardest part. Family friendly policies can be created but getting them embedded into everyday use is equally as important.

*Employees who had access to work life balance measures and felt that their organisations genuinely cared about their worklife balance had higher levels of engagement and were more likely to go the extra mile for their employer. They were more likely to recommend their employer as a good place to work, and were more likely to put in discretionary effort.*

Modern Families Index 2018, Working Families

**83%**

of employers offering flexible working saw an increase in productivity.

Flexible: Friend or foe? Vodafone 2018

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## Developing a family friendly workplace

Engagement and culture are frequently cited as key components of a flexible, family friendly workplace. But what are they, and how are they related?

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**Engagement** is the process of winning hearts and minds, right across the organisation. From the senior team downwards, it is about building support for the development of family friendly working. It requires a compelling message explaining why the organisation is doing it, how it is implemented, and the *benefits* it will bring. Engagement is an ongoing process.

**Culture** has been described as the ‘deep basic assumptions and beliefs that are shared by organisation members’. Becoming a family friendly organisation often means changing these assumptions and beliefs, through engagement, actions and consistent communication to one where a flexible, family friendly approach is seen as everyday ‘business as usual’ and not exceptional.

The two processes are interlinked. As engagement with family friendly working rises, and employees begin to use the work life options that have been put in place, then the culture begins to shift.

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This guide will illustrate some of the ways in which you can enhance the statutory provision, including quick wins as well as policies and practices which will take more time to implement and embed. These best practice examples of family friendly and flexible ways of working will both meet the needs of your employees and build a more effective productive business.

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## The business case for family friendly working

Establishing the business case for family friendly working within your organisation ensures that it stands a better chance of delivering organisational benefits than if introduced off the shelf. It also helps when persuading senior leaders and line managers that embarking on this route is necessary and worthwhile. The business case is about winning hearts and minds through a sound understanding of the benefits to the organisation.

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### Retention

A family friendly workplace has a positive effect on retention. Employers who are able to offer a family friendly approach with opportunities for career progression are particularly likely to benefit from this. Employees value the ability to work flexibly, and this is an important factor in deciding whether to stay with their employer or move on. Retaining women, in particular those with caring responsibilities, is also linked to both better diversity and making the most of employee skills.

### Recruitment

A family friendly workplace has a positive effect on recruitment. Employers who are able to offer a family friendly approach with opportunities for career progression are particularly likely to benefit from this. Employees value the ability to work flexibly, and this is an important factor in deciding whether to stay with their employer or move on.

*Flexibility is particularly important to younger workers. Work-life balance and work flexibility scored higher than salary or benefits as the most important factors when evaluating a new job.*

Deloitte Millennial Survey 2018

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### Diversity and changing social expectations

Family friendly workplaces are more diverse. They remove some of the barriers facing some individuals at work and improve opportunities for all. At present women and disabled people are more likely to take lower paid part time work to fit in with their needs, leading to their underrepresentation at all levels. Remote working, for example, can keep people in work who aren't able to commute. Rethinking work in a family friendly way can also help to address the pay gap by providing the opportunity for men and women to balance work and care more equally.

Social trends mean that businesses need to take flexibility seriously. Not only is it an important lifestyle criteria for younger workers, but it is also needed to meet changing social trends. And attitudes are changing around fathers too, with increasing numbers expecting to be able to share the care of their children and expect to be able to use flexible working to help them do this.

### Productivity, performance and career progression

Introducing flexibility can boost performance and productivity. From reductions in unplanned absence to increases in discretionary effort from more motivated employees, flexibility can bring tangible rewards. According to the International Labour Office, flexible working leads to improved employee relations and better quality management, resulting in enhanced productivity.

## The business case for family friendly working

Pursuit Marketing have seen productivity gains through introducing flexible working. All staff now do a 4 day week with no impact on salary or benefits. This has resulted in a 30% increase in productivity and 500% increase in job applications.

*A study of UK businesses and employees by HSBC found that nine in ten employees (89%) consider flexible working to be the biggest motivator to their productivity levels within the workplace – a view shared equally among male and female employees (87% and 90% respectively) – and more so than financial incentives (77%).*

Family friendly working can help maximise the talents of your employees. This is especially relevant for employers who are looking to increase the proportion of women in senior roles within their organisation. A more inclusive approach can allow them to make the most of their skills and experience and rise through the ranks, rather than being stuck in lower level roles that don't utilise all their abilities.

### Operational costs

By allowing your employees to work remotely, you're likely to have less people in the building at once. This can allow you to reduce both your office space and your carbon footprint and cut your business overheads significantly. In addition, time spent commuting can instead be used as productive work time as employees are freed from coming into the office every day. Reduced sickness absence costs can also result from increases in employee wellbeing and engagement and ability to work flexibly.

### Work design & agility

Introducing flexibility is a good opportunity to look at the way work and jobs are designed. Do things need to be done the same way? Redesigning jobs and procedures on a flexible basis means that improvements in efficiency and effectiveness can be achieved. It also provides the opportunity to rethink jobs on a more flexible, inclusive basis: for example opening up the possibility of part time or remote working.

The flexibility associated with family friendly working can help your organisation become more agile and responsive, enabling you to extend operating times and work across time zones. In the financial crisis in 2008, many businesses used flexibility to help them navigate through, retaining key staff through the use of flexibility: by enabling them to take unpaid sabbaticals or reducing their hours for a period of time allowing them to extend operating times and work across time zones.

*Four out of five of the country's seven million part timers, the vast majority of whom are women, are stuck in jobs that do not maximise their skills.*

Working below potential: women and part time work. Sheffield Hallam University 2006

*Fifty five per cent of millennial fathers admitted they were not confident enough to speak to their employers about reducing their hours spent in the office. Forty-two per cent said they felt resentful towards them as a result.*

Working below potential: women and part time work. Sheffield Hallam University 2006



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## Maternity support

Barclays have an enhanced maternity pay scheme which gives, after 26 weeks service, 26 weeks leave at 100% of normal pay plus 13 weeks statutory pay. If they have less than 26 weeks service a mother receives 6 weeks at 100% of normal pay less the value of Maternity Allowance. Employees do not have to repay any occupational family pay if they do not return to work after their leave.

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### The basics

Maternity leave and pay is a statutory obligation for employers, but it is also an opportunity to go beyond the legislative minimums, using these as a base from which to develop innovative and generous schemes that support mothers and deliver for the business.

There are a number of options, but they share the common characteristics of maximising choice for mothers when they take leave, and work to ensure a successful return to work when they come back.

### Enhancing pay

Many employers enhance maternity pay – for example paying employees more, over a longer period, or paying a bonus on return to work.

What are the benefits of paying women more than the statutory minimums? Many employers choose to enhance as there is evidence that it makes it more likely that a woman will return to work after maternity leave. For organisations that are focused on getting more women into management roles, maternity pay can help ensure that women are able to stay and develop their careers. It can be a powerful attractor of talent, as well as a retention tool. And many employers see enhancing pay as a way of demonstrating their commitment to their employees, as well as meeting their social responsibilities as a good employer.

Grant Thornton offer people on maternity and adoption leave flexibility in how to draw down their pay. On top of their statutory pay, employees are given a percentage of their salary as a 'pot' and can use this to top up their pay while on leave to 50 per cent, 75 per cent or 100 per cent of their weekly pay. They can also choose to take periods of unpaid leave.

Vodafone's global maternity policy gives a minimum of six months paid leave and a four day week on full pay for the first six months back at work.

Yorkshire Building Society offer 16 weeks full pay, 10 weeks half pay & 13 weeks at SMP. And 5 days paid leave for IVF treatment.

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## Maternity support

Royal Bank of Scotland offer a phased return to work scheme. The employee is entitled to 12 weeks phase back, working agreed reduced hours over a set period and will receive full pay and benefits. There's no set programme of return as each request needs to be considered on an individual basis. A phase back might involve a build up of hours each day or the number of days in a week.

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### Returning to work

To maximise the number of women returning, and to smooth their path back to work many employers now provide support for mothers transitioning to parenthood. This can take the form of workshops, coaching, mentoring/buddying as well as access to information about childcare, childcare vouchers, employee assistance programmes and information on an intranet or in guidebooks.

Forward planning and communication before and during maternity leave should minimise any issues, but there are also a number of different things you can do to ease the transition.

- Ensure that the employee is aware of the opportunity to work flexibly and discuss options well in advance of their return date (see flexible working).
- A specific returners induction programme or tailored workshops.
- Giving the employee an internal or external coach or mentor to provide practical and emotional support on a one-to-one basis.
- Ensure that the employee has an opportunity to discuss and agree her performance objectives following her return, and that these are carefully considered and adjusted appropriately if she is working part-time.

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- Setting up a voluntary 'buddy' network where women who have previously been on maternity leave are matched with those about to go on leave and/or about to return from leave.
  - Provide facilities in which they can either breastfeed their babies, or express milk for feeding outside working hours. All that is really needed is a comfortable, convenient and private room, and a fridge (separate to that used by other staff) for safely storing the milk.

### Phased return

Many employers have some kind of phasing arrangement for the first few weeks or months to ease their return. For example, if a woman plans to return to work full time, she might want to start by working 2 days a week for the first month, then 4 days for the next month, then returning to full time work. Some employers pay additional 'transition days' towards the end of maternity leave to prepare mothers for their return.

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## Paternity support

Unibail-Radamco-Westfield, a construction firm, support fathers by doubling paternity leave and giving full pay. Four weeks Paternity Leave can be taken on full pay for all eligible staff. The leave can also be used flexibly and be taken in separate blocks.

Independent Living Fund Scotland - a small public sector employer, gives 6 weeks fully paid paternity leave.

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### The basics

Paternity leave is relatively short, compared to maternity leave but it has high potential as a tool to break down traditional 'male' work cultures. Many organisations have put time and effort into developing their paternity leave offer because they recognise that getting fathers to take their full quota of leave is important if they want to change their culture and demonstrate that it is acceptable and expected that all parents take time off work for family reasons.

### Enhancing leave and pay

Although paternity leave is not lengthy, it is possible to enhance it either through pay, duration or flexibility in how it is taken. Enabling the leave to be taken flexibly and at any time in the first year and removing the length of service requirement, are quick wins for the employer looking to support fathers.

Employers choose to enhance paternity leave for a number of reasons. Fathers, especially younger ones expect to be more hands on with the care of their children and they expect their employer to support them. Support for fathers can also act as a recruitment and retention tool. And organisations that extend work life policies to their fathers find that it has a positive impact for working mothers and on improved gender diversity, especially at higher levels.

### *Changing expectations: fathers and family*

*In the mid-1980s, close to half the public agreed "a man's job is to earn money; a woman's job is to look after the home and family". Just 13% subscribe to this view now.*

British Social Attitudes 30, National Centre for Social Research, 2013



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## Paternal support

Citi Group support fathers by offering 'New Dads Workshops' aimed at new or expectant fathers, led by an external partner. These aim to help new or expecting fathers navigate the challenges and opportunities of incorporating new fatherhood and work. Within the workshops the group take time to explore their own goals and aspirations for fatherhood, how their ideas about fatherhood might be similar to or different to the one they inherited from their own fathers and managing boundaries with others (specifically managers and other family members).

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### Supporting fathers

The way in which you support fathers overlaps significantly with the support offered to other employees, particularly mothers. This means that things such as offering mentoring, coaching and discussing workloads and flexible working are just as relevant and useful to men as they are to women.

Culturally however, many businesses have thought primarily about women as carers of young children, and fathers taking time off around childbirth and beyond can still be unfamiliar. Fathers therefore can be a bit hesitant to go against the grain, and this can mean they don't always feel comfortable about asking for time off and working flexibly. Recognising this and making the effort to reassure fathers and encourage them to use paternity leave is essential. It makes good business sense too: one of the main drivers of father's dissatisfaction and disengagement with their work is when they feel their opportunities for work life balance are limited.

Pinsent Masons has a senior Fathers' Champion and fathers are eligible for enhanced Shared Parental Leave, a mentoring scheme, webinars and speaker events on work and fatherhood and can access a parenting employee network, including a recently established Working Fathers Group.

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### Antenatal leave

Fathers have the legal right to take unpaid leave to accompany the expectant mother to two of her antenatal appointments, of up to 6 ½ hours each. You can support fathers by having a more flexible approach:

- By allowing paid leave to attend antenatal appointments.
- By expanding the amount of leave available so that fathers can attend more than 2 of the appointments.

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## Shared Parental Leave

Shared Parental Leave lets working parents share statutory leave and pay when their child is born or when they adopt a child. Parents can choose how they share the leave between them and whether to take the leave separately or simultaneously. Shared Parental Leave is intended to allow parents greater flexibility and choice in how they care for their new child in its first year.

Employers who want to boost their SPL uptake should remind employees that they have a legal right to take the leave.

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### SPL and pay

The introduction of SPL allows the possibility for fathers to take extended periods of time off work in the first 12 months of their child's life. Businesses can choose to enhance the pay and relax some of the eligibility criteria to encourage take-up.

The business benefits of encouraging take up of SPL range from reduced absenteeism (as parents have a better work-life balance), improved engagement, a positive reputation as a family friendly employer of choice, and external recognition. Some employers have chosen to go well beyond the statutory minimums.

For some businesses, especially smaller ones, well paid long periods of leave might be unrealistic, but this isn't to say that SPL can't be used creatively to provide a real option for employees. Allowing additional flexibility in how leave is taken (for example, allowing it to be taken at any time within the first 12 months rather than tying it to the date of birth), waiving notification periods and simplifying procedures are some of the options that are low cost but can have a positive effect. One of the biggest barriers to male employees using SPL is that of company culture – where they fear that taking extended 'family' leave will be frowned upon or seen in a negative way by their manager and/or colleagues.

Aviva is offering its UK staff up to one year of leave, of which 26 weeks' is at full basic pay for each parent employed by the company within the first 12 months of a child's arrival, with no eligibility criteria relating to service length or earnings threshold. The policy entitlement includes:

- Parents get an equal amount of paid and unpaid leave when a new child arrives.
- Includes full-time and part-time employees across all levels of the company.
- No requirement to share the parental leave between parents: the leave and pay is offered to the Aviva employee, irrespective of their partner's employment status or leave taken.
- If both parents are employees of Aviva, they will each have their own entitlement to leave and pay, which they can take at the same time.

## Shared Parental Leave

Employers have 3 main options how they implement SPL:

1

### Statutory minimum

**Pros:** Lowest cost, easiest to implement off the shelf.

**Cons:** Perceived as lack of support for SPL, active discouragement to men taking a fatherhood role with conflicting messages around fatherhood for employees, families may be seen as a burden, female carer/male breadwinner-stereotypes reinforced, potential risk of discrimination.

2

### Enhancing SPL, but separately from other maternity enhancements

**Pros:** May encourage fathers to take a more active role in their child's first year.

**Cons:** Clear risk of discrimination, sends a less-than-positive message if not completely matched to existing maternity provisions, employees might reasonably infer that the organisation's attitude towards fathers is less supportive than towards mothers.

3

### Match SPL to existing maternity provisions

**Pros:** Promotes inclusiveness, challenge gender stereotypes about working and caring, likely to have positive impacts on female career progression, talent retention and employee engagement.

**Cons:** Potentially more expensive.

## Parental Leave

Parental leave is a statutory right to unpaid leave. Employees are entitled to 18 weeks' leave for each child and adopted child, up to their 18th birthday.

Parental leave is NOT the same as Shared Parental Leave. Because it is unpaid, Parental Leave is relatively underused. However, some employers have decided to enhance the leave to provide more options for their workforce. These options are (in descending order of popularity):

- Make it available to foster carers
- More than 4 weeks a year can be taken
- It can be taken in blocks of less than 1 week (the statutory minimum)
- It is available to employees from day 1 of their employment
- It is paid
- More than 18 weeks can be taken in total

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## Support for carers

There are increasing numbers of employees with caring responsibilities other than parenting and employers are increasingly trying to support this largely unidentified population among their workforce. Carers UK estimate that 3 million people are carers – around 10% of the UK working population. They expect the number of carers to triple over the next 20 years. Employers have been developing their own carer's policies to supplement the low level of formal provision.

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- By allowing for some paid Time Off for Dependants. Best practice is to pay dependent leave, most commonly for up to five days
  - By extending the definition of a dependent (to include, for example, an elderly neighbour who relies on your employee for care)
  - Providing additional carers leave – for example paid terminal care leave, adjustment leave or occasional crisis leave
  - By encouraging employee networks, specifically for Carers or a more general Family network comprising of parents and carers
  - Introducing a Carer Passport which clarifies a carer's needs with subsequent line managers
  - Using short term flexible working as a temporary adjustment to an employee's working pattern, rather than a permanent change to their contract. It is often used to enable employees to cope with unexpected life changes such as end of life care, supporting a dependant through a short term illness, support for a disabled dependant or disability prior to full diagnosis and a statement of needs. It is most commonly granted for any reason at the employees request.

Centrica offer a period of paid carer's leave - up to one month matched paid leave per year in addition to five days paid Time Off for Dependants. They also have a large and thriving Carers Network.

West Dunbartonshire Council allows employees to spread the cost of unpaid leave across a long period, thus minimising financial impact on the employee. It also allows employment to be continuous and protects the employee accordingly.

Direct Line offer five days paid time off for dependents and paid time off for partners to attend antenatal appointments.



## Supporting employees: Coaches, buddies, champions and mentors

Offering different kinds of support for employees is increasingly part of companies' family friendly working strategy. Providing options like peer-to-peer buddying, professional coaching, senior Board level champions and a network of champions have all become popular as ways to both help employees at specific times (for example returning to work after maternity leave) and to develop careers and realise potential.

### Coaching

Coaching is a collaborative process between an employee (or group of employees) and an expert coach who is there to encourage discussion about work issues and offer advice and planning to help achieve the positive outcomes that have been identified. Instead it is being successfully deployed to support employees for example around the time they become parents through maternity and paternity coaching, or helping women returners reintegrate back in to the world of work. Coaching is commonly offered to managers too. Some organisations bring in external coaches, whilst others use existing trained staff members.

Grant Thornton offers transitional coaching to all people taking long term leave, facilitated by internal coaches.

### Buddying

More employers are encouraging their people to support each other, informally, through a network of buddies. Most commonly, this is usually a parent or carer who supports another employee transitioning to parenting or caring. Sometimes there is a network of buddies organised centrally, perhaps through HR, or sometimes it is a more informal arrangement through an employee resource group. Some employers provide some training and guidance for buddies in this voluntary role.

### Champions

When trying to drive the early stages of engagement and culture change, using champions is very effective. These are senior leaders whose explicit commitment and support of family friendly working send a powerful signal that it is welcomed. Employers can also create a network of voluntary champions across each area of the business to further disseminate the messages around flexible working.

Sackers LLP This firm has an internal maternity mentoring system for lawyers to supplement its coaching sessions. The mentoring system offers bespoke support from mothers who have experienced the transition to working parent themselves and understand the culture. Maternity mentors are all operating at partner level within the business.

Public Health England set up a Flexible Working Champions Network to support staff and managers implement flexibility and create a flexible working culture. They now have more than 70 Champions across the organisation.

### Mentoring

Mentoring is usually carried out between two employees within the same company. Most typically a more senior employee will mentor a more junior one, offering support and guidance drawn from their own experience with a view to developing the career of more junior staff and getting them ready to take on more responsibility. Mentoring relationships can be long or short term, and don't have to be top down. Upwards mentoring is used in some organisations as a way of keeping senior staff in touch with the concerns and challenges facing those lower down. Mentoring can be particularly useful to organisations who are looking at getting more women up the career ladder, pairing senior female managers with women who are at the start of their careers or who are returning from maternity leave and need help re-establishing their position and resuming their career path.

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## Other leave or time off

Sabbaticals are agreed periods of leave from work, which can range from a couple of months to up to a year. Employees return to their old job once it is completed. Although sabbaticals are usually unpaid, in some circumstances they might be paid – if the sabbatical is to carry out job related research, for example.

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Sabbaticals can often come as a reward for long service, and typically were awarded after 10 or 15 years. However, as people tend to stay in jobs for shorter periods now, tying benefits to unrealistically long periods of service makes less sense and so the qualifying period might be dropped to five years (or perhaps even less).

Sabbaticals are different from a career break, as the employee has the security of returning to their job at the end of the period. Taking a career break usually means resigning, with an agreement to return in the future if nothing has changed.

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### Setting up a sabbatical policy

A sabbatical policy does not need to be complex, but should cover:

- Eligibility criteria, and how requests are evaluated and decided
- The maximum duration, and the procedure: who needs to be informed, what paperwork is required
- Pay and benefits: what is suspended, what continues
- Refusing sabbaticals: ensuring fair and equal decisions
- Workload planning: what will happen during the absence

Lexington Grey offer employees a three month sabbatical, after four years' service which can be taken flexibly over a number of years, or appended to paternity or maternity leave.



# Family friendly and flexible workplaces

Best practice guide for employers

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## Innovative ideas

Offering employees flexibility isn't just about adjusting working time or place. In thinking creatively about work life balance some employers have pushed the boundaries, allowing employees to take time away from work in innovative ways. Here are some examples of employers who have introduced new ideas as a way of getting more flex into the business.

Holiday Extras introduced 'Anywhere, Anytime' to give teams the option to work whenever and wherever they wanted to as long as they delivered their objectives and were connected and contactable.

Lewis Silkin LLP created the Rockhopper service – a team of exclusively homeworking senior lawyers, choosing their hours and paid a basic salary plus additional fees for specific types of work, increasing the client base and retaining senior lawyers.

McDonald's, Pfizer and Microsoft have introduced a variation of compressed hours which is available to a greater number of employees. They enable people in some parts of the business to work slightly longer days Monday to Thursday and therefore able to go home early on Friday.

Liberty Speciality Market have introduced Dress for your Diary as a way of helping to change culture.

Spotify have introduced 6 months fully paid leave for fathers within first 3 years.

The Telegraph have introduced 26 weeks fully paid leave for fathers.

The Intellectual Property Office has removed core hours, so people can work anytime between 5 am and 10 pm. Most people haven't dramatically changed their hours but the flexibility is there should they want to do so.

UBS's Take Two scheme enables employees to take two hours personal time per week to do what they want: no HR, no form filling. Initiated by the investment bank division, the scheme has seen a high take up across the board with team members committing to cover for each other.

The Royal Air Force offers flexible annual leave, enabling those with limited flexibility on a day to day basis, a way of organising their leave to better suit their family circumstances.

Deloitte introduced Time Out in summer 2014 in recognition of the fact people were balancing family and other personal commitments alongside demanding careers. Time Out allows any employee with over a year's service to request a four-week block of extra leave, unsalaried but with continuing benefits allowances, to be taken at a mutually acceptable time. Employees can request a Time Out each year with the hope they return to work re-energised.



## Flexible Working

Flexible, agile, smart or dynamic? Organisations use a variety of terms to describe a more modern and flexible way of working that applies to all employees, not just mothers, but for the purposes of this guide we will use the term flexible working or flex.

Flexible working is an important part of a modern, family friendly workplace. Flexibility is part of a wider approach to work organisation and people management that has at its core the principle that good integration between work and life delivers for both employees and for business.

Flexible working is not just for people who are becoming parents, who are caring for others or who are winding down to retirement. Increasingly younger workers starting out in their careers want and expect flexible working options to be available.

*Ninety two per cent of Generation Y (people born between 1980 and 2000 and have grown up almost entirely in the digital age) identify flexibility as a top priority when selecting a workplace.*

UK Commission for Employment and Skills

### Types of Flexible working

There are numerous types of flexible working available, which can be divided into three main categories: flexible working place, flexible working time, and flexible working amount. These may be combined: for example, it's common to find people flexing their workplace (working from home) and flexing their time (working around school pickup times).

#### Examples by type

##### Flex place

- Working from home
- Working from different offices
- Virtual Teams

##### Flex time

- Flexi time
- Compressed week
- Term time working

##### Flex amount

- Part time work
- Project dependant hours
- Job share

## Flexible Working

**Policy and practice** Creating a family friendly culture means that flexible working needs to be fully embedded. This is where working flexibly is seen as normal practice, and not an exception to the norm or special dispensation. Many organisations have similar flexible working policies on paper, but the experience of the employees is very different, because of the culture around flexibility.

### Getting flexibility right

*Flexibility needs to be a realistic option, that doesn't carry a penalty. If some employees flex their time for example, coming in early and leaving early, they can run the risk of being seen as less committed if the culture values late nights, presenteeism and socialising after work. It is addressing issues such as this which constitutes the practical work of turning policy into practice.*

Crown Prosecution Service enables employees to work from a variety of more local locations rather than commuting into large offices in city centres.

Atrium Underwriters have showcased an extremely successful job-share arrangement among two senior female underwriters.

The Civil Service introduced a Job-share Finder which allows all civil servants to identify and contact each other when looking for a job-share partnership.

### Managing remote working

*Advances in technology are rapidly making remote working easier, making attitudes of presenteeism more difficult to uphold. This has brought with it many benefits, but also challenges. Whilst homeworking allows people to avoid long commutes, for example, or helps a business rationalise its property portfolio there are legitimate concerns about work overspill and isolation. Using technology to facilitate flexible working needs to be accompanied by good management, to ensure that the ability to work anywhere, at any time doesn't become all the time. It is up to managers to be aware of the hours that people are putting in, and if necessary step in if working time is becoming excessive.*

Research has shown that home workers have a tendency to go above and beyond, often putting in extra hours as a way of compensating for their lack of 'face time' with colleagues in the office

Skills and Employment Survey,  
University of Cardiff, 2017

Henmans LLP, a law firm, enable employees to step their workloads up or down. There is a recognition of the potential for home based workers to over-work, and they are discouraged from accessing company systems and email in their non-working hours. This is monitored and action is possible if an employee appears to be in danger of compromising their work-life balance.

## Managing flexibility

Despite ample evidence of its positive effects, managers are often unwilling to allow more flexibility as their primary focus is control and effort extraction. Getting manager support for flexibility is therefore crucial. This means ensuring that managers understand not just their minimum obligations, but why the business wants a flexible culture and their role within that.

Managing flexibility can be complex. Line managers must not only manage staff with different working patterns, but they must also ensure that they deliver against their business targets. But many line managers are left untrained in how to manage flexible workers and how to get the most out of flexible working arrangements. A successful family friendly and flexible workplace depends on line manager support; where managers remain sceptical or resistant it is very hard to change the culture. Line manager training needs to encompass both the practicalities of day to day management, but also how to extract the full value of flexibility to develop high performing and productive workers.

Managers need to ensure that they don't sometimes conflate performance management issues with flex working issues and blame the latter for problems rather than the former. And all employees and their managers must ensure that whatever flex pattern is implemented suits not only the role but also the individual's optimal working style – thus ensuring everyone works to their full potential.

Five Key skills for managers:

- Understanding the benefits of new ways of working and the options available
- Managing by outputs, not presence
- Managing and communicating with a dispersed team
- Building trust and giving control
- Understanding potential pitfalls

Barclays took a top down approach: CEO and senior leader endorsement and training of leaders below them. This trickle down approach has so far resulted in 4,000 managers being trained.

Unibail-Rodamco-Westfield, a construction firm, have three training programmes for line managers.

- The first covers flexible working, how to manage a flexible working request, and how the business can benefit from and support flexible working
- The second teaches line managers how to avoid bias in their team
- The third equips managers with coaching skills to help employees solve problems, improve their performance and develop their confidence

In addition, line managers have one-to-one meetings with HR when they are notified of a pregnancy or forthcoming parental leave in their team.

## Recruiting flexibly

Changing to flexible recruitment can have a significant impact on overall flexible culture. Advertising jobs on a flexible basis means that firms can attract talent from a much wider pool, from the vast number of people looking for a job that offers flexibility. By requiring managers to think about offering roles on a flexible basis, it breaks down the idea that full time, inflexible work is the norm and instigates thinking about the way that jobs are designed and done, and by whom. If you are using a recruitment consultancy, ensure that they are properly briefed about the flexible working options available for each role.

### Flexible recruitment - four stages

1. It's a business win to offer flexible jobs. Think about: how flexible can you be for the best person? Look at your recruitment processes. Can you perhaps do it differently?
2. Job design. What is the job? What would success look like? Does it need to be done full time? What do clients and customers really need? What are the expected outputs?
3. Think Flexibly. What options are there? Different hours, remote working, job share? Would it suit customers better if it was 11-7, not 9-5? Be realistic about the minimum requirements for the role.
4. Advertise. State clearly you are open to flexibility. If you are open to discussion it is fine spell out what options you are not prepared to consider (e.g. this job is not suitable for home working) but also be open to candidates about what other flexibility. Use the Happy To Talk Flexible Working logo on your job adverts to signify the role's flexibility.

Lloyd's, along with many other leading employers, now use the Happy To Talk Flexible Working logo on relevant job advertisements.

Lloyds Banking Group's view of flexibility isn't just that it's considered; it's expected. Following the introduction of their 'agile hiring initiative', the bank has moved from the assumption that most jobs are full-time to the assertion that part-time and flexible work can be possible and, in some cases, can even be preferable. At the last count, 93% of their roles are advertised internally and externally as flexible. Critically, hiring managers are now expected to include an option for agile working in any roles they advertise, and explain their rationale for any that don't.



[www.workingfamilies.org.uk/campaigns/happy-to-talk-flexible-working](http://www.workingfamilies.org.uk/campaigns/happy-to-talk-flexible-working)

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## Flexible retirement

Flexible retirement options are for employees in their later career, as they approach the age at which they consider retiring. Employees reduce their working commitment, effectively retiring from work in phases. It is not simply moving to part time work, as the example below shows:

BT says that many of their most valuable people are mature in years. Losing scarce skills and experience in a precipitative manner can be damaging to the business, and therefore it offers a range of flexible retirement options easing employees' path into full retirement. These include:

- wind down (part-time or job-share)
- step down (moving to a lower grade)
- time out (phased sabbaticals)
- helping hands (secondments either full- or part-time)
- ease down (a gradual reduction of hours or responsibilities)

There are many advantages of phased or flexible retirement. At American Express it creates the opportunity to retain essential knowledge and customer relationships, and allow for a planned transfer of experience and skills. It assists businesses with succession planning, and can help address problems finding suitable recruits in an ageing labour market. It can also help to avoid a damaging 'cliff-edge' scenario, where a number of experienced employees all retire within a short period.

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### Phased retirement and pensions

It may be possible to take benefits while still working. How this works will depend on the rules of individual pension schemes. There are tax implications.

Employees should check with their scheme administrator who will be able to provide more detail.

For more detail, visit the Pensions Advisory Service <https://www.pensionsadvisoryservice.org.uk/about-pensions/retirement-choices/flexible-retirement>

*A number of factors mean that flexible, phased retirement is likely to become more common. The UK has an ageing workforce, meaning that working lives are being extended. Flexible retirement offers the options of keeping working, but in a less intensive way. Many older workers are also carers, either for other adults or providing care for grandchildren, and for them flexible retirement offers the opportunity to combine their work and caring lives.*





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## Returns

One family friendly growth area, particularly in finance and law, has been in Returns. This is when employers seek to recruit people who previously left their workforce. Now equipped with a better, flexible, more accommodating culture, companies are looking at getting these people back if they can. Employers in the past will have invested in their training and professional development and they represent a valuable resource who already knows the business.

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Attracting this 'lost' talent back provides the additional benefits of increasing diversity, boosts recruitment in a tight labour market, and clearly signals a family friendly and inclusive workplace.

Although returners are familiar with the business and understand how it operates, employers who run returner programs recognise that they need support in getting back up to speed. Returner programmes are designed to help them through this process, by providing training, a phased reintroduction to work, and coaching and/or mentoring to support their reintegration. Part of this process is agreeing working patterns: many are parents who left work because they were unable to combine work and family life, and so finding the right work life fit is a crucial part of a returnship. One size won't fit all. Some people may wish to come back full time, whilst others might want to work in a reduced hours way. The more accommodating the business can be, the higher the chances of a successful return. Some schemes guarantee employment and demonstrate high retention levels.

UBS's Career Comeback programme recruits people who've taken a career break – and hires them straight into permanent roles. Participants take part in group coaching sessions and benefit from ongoing coaching throughout the year.

Allianz opened their returners@allianz programme in January 2018. They offer a six month paid placement for people looking to get back into work after a break. Returners are supported with training and mentoring.





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## Measuring the impact

Measuring the impact of flexibility is worth doing: it can be the difference between it being seen as an unwelcome obligation or a business benefit.

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Measuring the bottom line impact can be straightforward in some instances: for example, real estate savings through the adoption of more remote working. But it's worth thinking about other measures too. These might be reduced absenteeism, effect on retention, recruitment and maternity return rates, or the gender profile of staff moving into management. Many organisations are looking at flexibility through a gender and diversity lens, and using flexibility to fix their leaky talent pipeline.

To be able to confirm the effect of flexible working requires monitoring. This does not have to be time intensive. Building monitoring into things like annual performance reviews, promotions, induction and exit interviews are ways to get a view on the way that flexibility is playing out.

Cisco is measuring both formal and informal take-up of flexibility and reports that a recent employee survey showed that 81 per cent believe flexibility is driving positive experiences for Cisco employees. The survey also showed that by providing the technology to enable flexible working, Cisco has significant corporate and employee advantages. For example, employees work from home on average 1.1 days per week; give back 60 per cent of reduced commute time to Cisco; and personally save approximately £700 per year on commuting costs. Those who work flexibly are 22 per cent more likely to be highly engaged employees and are 30 per cent less likely to leave voluntarily than their colleagues who do not work in this way.







## Parental leave best practice guide – at a glance

Linklaters's parental policy entitles mothers to 26 weeks contractual full pay in total, regardless of whether this is taken as maternity leave or SPL. If the father is a Linklaters employee, he is entitled to 26 weeks contractual full pay, regardless of any SMP or contractual pay received by the mother from her employer.

### Maternity leave and pay

Statutory qualifying period – 26 weeks working for employer (at 15 weeks before expected dates).

Total number of weeks leave: 52

#### Class leading

Number of weeks on full pay: 26

Number of weeks part pay: 13

Number of weeks no pay: 13

No penalty or repayment asked for if woman does not return.

#### Good practice

Number of weeks full pay: 13

Number of weeks part pay: 13

Number of weeks statutory pay only: 13

### Paternity leave and pay

Statutory qualifying period – 26 weeks working continuously for employer (at 15 weeks before expected birth date).

NOTE: Qualifying is slightly different for parents who are adopting.

Total number of weeks leave: 2

#### Class leading

Number of weeks full pay: 6

Leave can be split – i.e. father can take leave in days not just week blocks. Leave can be delayed – father can take the leave any time up to 356 days after the birth.

Leave is a day one right – no length of service requirement.

#### Good practice

Number of weeks leave full pay: 2

Some flexibility in when a father can take leave.

### Shared parental leave and pay

Qualifying periods are different depending on which parent wants to use the shared parental leave and pay.

Total number of weeks leave possible: 50

#### Class leading

Matched to enhanced maternity pay: 26 weeks on full pay, available to either father or mother.

Leave can be taken at any time during the first year of the baby's life. Leave is offered REGARDLESS of the pay and leave of the parent's partner.

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## Parental leave best practice guide – at a glance

### Good practice

Matched to enhanced maternity pay. Eg. 26 weeks on full pay. Leave and pay is reduced for the partner by the amount of time the mother has already taken off on maternity leave.

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#### Best SPL practice – in more detail

There are four configurations of leave and pay for those employers who choose to match SPL to existing enhanced maternity provisions.

##### Platinum

Individually matched and floating: The number of potential weeks enhanced pay available to a partner taking SPL is the same as the number of weeks enhanced pay available to a mother taking maternity leave. The weeks of enhanced pay on SPL can be taken at any time during the first year of the baby's life/first year following parental order/ placement for adoption.

##### Gold

Individually matched and tied: The number of potential weeks enhanced pay available to a partner taking SPL are the same as the number of weeks enhanced pay available to a mother taking maternity leave. The window in which the weeks of enhanced pay can be taken is tied to the date of birth of the child e.g. if up to 18 weeks enhanced pay are available these must be taken in the 18 weeks immediately following birth.

##### Silver

Family shared and floating: The number of potential weeks enhanced pay available to a partner taking SPL are the same as the number of weeks enhanced pay available to a mother taking maternity leave less any weeks of statutory maternity pay and leave the mother has taken/intends to take (regardless of who the mother is working for). The window in which the weeks of enhanced pay can be taken can be taken at any time during the first year of the baby's life/first year following parental order/ placement for adoption.

##### Bronze

Family shared and tied: The number of potential weeks enhanced pay available to a partner taking SPL are the same as the number of weeks enhanced pay available to a mother taking maternity leave less any weeks of statutory maternity pay and leave the mother has taken/intends to take (regardless of who the mother is working for). The window in which the weeks of enhanced pay can be taken is tied to the date of the birth of the child e.g. If up to 18 weeks enhanced pay are available these must be taken in the 18 weeks immediately following birth.

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## Further information on Working Families:

Working Families promotes workplace cultures which support work-life balance and flexible working for all working people. It does this by helping employers develop an agile, flexible approach to work that maximises engagement, gender equality, wellbeing and on-going high performance. [www.workingfamilies.org.uk](http://www.workingfamilies.org.uk)

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