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OUTLOOK

VIEWS FROM
EMPLOYERS

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FOCUS

on working parents

The CIPD is the professional body for HR and people development. The not-for-profit organisation champions better work and working lives and has been setting the benchmark for excellence in people and organisation development for more than 100 years. It has more than 140,000 members across the world, provides thought leadership through independent research on the world of work, and offers professional training and accreditation for those working in HR and learning and development.

Focus on working parents

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Foreword

The interface between work and childcare has changed significantly over the past few decades. The growing rate of female participation in the UK labour market means that women now make up around half of the workforce. This means that a very high proportion of working women and men are parents and that far fewer mothers stay at home full-time to look after their children. The traditional model of a father working full-time as the sole breadwinner is a thing of the past, and the model of a father working full-time and the mother part-time is also in decline.

These changes have profound implications for both men and women's employment and how government and employers can best support working parents against this shifting landscape. The overriding aim should be to recognise and encourage the growing involvement of fathers in childrearing while at the same time acknowledging that most working mothers still don't experience anything like a level playing field in terms of trying to balance work and care commitments. We should not forget that there has been much progress towards achieving gender equality at work for women, and initiatives such as the extension of the right to request flexible working to all and shared parental leave (SPL) and pay will hopefully help working men take on a more equal role in caring. However, the

significant contribution that the 'motherhood penalty' continues to make to the persistent gender pay gap and the very low take-up of SPL by working dads, as evidenced by this research, are a stark reminder of the progress that is still needed.

Another less recognised, but rapidly increasing, type of caring responsibility experienced by employees is eldercare – the ageing population is the major demographic shift affecting society and the workplace. In line with rising life expectancy, in the UK there is growing demand for informal care, and the level of unpaid care provided by people for ill and/or elderly parents or spouses or other relatives is expected to rise significantly in future years. The finding in this survey report that just 3% of employers have a dedicated policy dealing with eldercare is a warning bell, and there is an urgent need to ensure that a far greater number of employers implement appropriate support for workers with this type of caring responsibility. The Government and other stakeholders also have a key role to play in promoting this important agenda.

It is against this backdrop that the CIPD devoted a large section of its *Labour Market Outlook* (LMO) in summer 2016 to surveying a representative sample of employers about the organisational support they provide to working parents

and carers. This special LMO report therefore looks in detail at areas such as maternity and paternity provision as well as take-up of SPL. It also explores employers' level of awareness of, and attitudes towards, important new legislative changes that are due to come into force, including the extension of SPL and pay to working grandparents, Tax-Free Childcare and the entitlement to 30 hours of free childcare for working parents of three- and four-year-olds from 2017.

Rachel Suff
Public Policy Adviser

1 Maternity and paternity provision in workplaces

The UK's statutory framework governing employees' rights concerning maternity and paternity leave and pay is complex. Therefore, it's essential that employers have clear policies and procedures in place covering the legal steps as well as the organisation's own provision, and that line managers are able to communicate and implement these when needed.

Maternity leave and pay

Regardless of their length of service with an employer, women have the right to take up to 52 weeks' statutory maternity leave, consisting of 'ordinary maternity leave' for the first 26 weeks followed by 'additional maternity leave' for the final 26 weeks. The woman doesn't have to take leave for the

full 52 weeks, but there is a legal requirement to take at least 2 weeks off after her baby is born, which increases to 4 weeks if she works in a factory.

To qualify for statutory maternity pay (SMP), the female employee must meet certain conditions, including having been employed continuously for at least 26 weeks ending with the 15th week before the 'expected week of childbirth'. SMP is paid for up to 39 weeks and comprises 90% of the employee's average weekly earnings (before tax) for the first 6 weeks followed by £139.58 per week, or 90% of the employee's average weekly earnings (whichever is lower) for the next 33 weeks (www.gov.uk/maternity-pay-leave/pay). It's been typical practice

for the Government to annually review and uplift various statutory rates like maternity and paternity pay in line with inflation, but there was no increase for 2016-17 to these payments.

The most common approach to maternity pay on the part of organisations surveyed for this report is to follow the statutory minimum requirement – overall, almost half (48%) offer SMP for 39 weeks paid at 90% of average weekly earnings for the first 6 weeks with the following 33 weeks paid at the SMP rate or 90% of average weekly earnings, whichever is the lower (see Table 1).

Some employers are more generous and pay female staff on maternity

Table 1: Maternity pay policy in organisations (%)

	All	Private sector	Public sector	Voluntary Sector
Statutory minimum requirement, that is, SMP for 39 weeks paid at 90% of average weekly earnings for the first 6 weeks, followed by 33 weeks paid at the SMP rate or 90% of average weekly earnings, whichever is the lower	48	56	23	38
26 weeks' enhanced maternity pay at/near full rate of pay followed by 13 weeks at the SMP rate or 90% of average weekly earnings	18	11	42	17
13 weeks' enhanced maternity pay at/near full rate of pay followed by 26 weeks at the SMP rate or 90% of average weekly earnings	6	6	5	7
6 weeks' enhanced maternity pay at/near full rate of pay followed by 33 weeks at the SMP rate or 90% of average weekly earnings	5	5	5	10
4 weeks' enhanced maternity pay at/near full rate of pay followed by 35 weeks at the SMP rate or 90% of average weekly earnings	3	4	1	1
Other	6	5	5	16
Don't know	14	13	18	12

Base: All: 1,049; private sector: 688; public sector: 233; voluntary sector: 128.

Note: Figures may not sum to 100 because of rounding.

leave above the statutory rate, with almost one in five (18%) providing 26 weeks' enhanced maternity pay at or near the full rate of pay followed by 13 weeks at the SMP rate or 90% of average weekly earnings. A minority of organisations offer various, less generous rates of enhanced maternity pay.

Public sector employers are more likely to offer contractual maternity pay above the statutory rate. For example, 42% of such organisations provide 26 weeks' enhanced maternity pay at or near the full rate of pay followed by 13 weeks at the SMP rate or 90% of average weekly earnings, compared with 11% of private sector employers and 17% of voluntary sector employers.

Paternity leave and pay

An employee may be entitled to paternity leave and pay if their partner is having a baby or adopting a child or having a baby through surrogacy. Paternity leave also applies to a civil partner.

The main eligibility factors for basic paternity leave are:

- continuous employment for 26 weeks ending with the 15th week before the baby is due
- the employee must be the baby's biological father or the partner/husband of the mother
- the employee has (or expects to have) responsibility for the baby's upbringing (CIPD 2016a).

The maximum duration of the basic statutory leave is two weeks and paternity leave can be taken between:

- the date of the baby's birth or any day of the week following the birth, and
- within 56 days of the baby's birth date.

The employee must take statutory paternity leave in a block of one or two weeks within 56 days immediately following the birth. The rules are slightly different in the case of adoption.

By far the most common approach among our sample of employers is to provide the statutory two-week minimum requirement for paternity leave (71% of organisations). Just 7% have a more generous entitlement of four weeks, while 3% offer three weeks (see Table 2).

The rate of statutory paternity pay (SPP) is the same as SMP (that is, the current statutory level of £139.58 per week set by government, or 90% of the employee's average weekly earnings if this is less). However, an employee who does not qualify for SPP may be entitled to other welfare benefits. As Table 3 shows, the most common approach for around half of organisations (49%) is to provide the statutory minimum requirement for paternity pay followed by almost one in five (18%) that pay two weeks' enhanced paternity pay at or near the full rate of pay. Public and voluntary sector organisations are more likely than private sector organisations to enhance paternity pay provision, with 29% of public sector and 26% of voluntary sector

Table 2: Paternity leave policy in organisations (%)

	All	Private sector	Public sector	Voluntary sector
Statutory 2-week minimum requirement	71	72	64	77
4 weeks	7	6	10	5
3 weeks	3	3	3	3
Other	4	4	4	5
Don't know	15	15	19	11

Base: All: 1,049; private sector: 689; public sector: 232; voluntary sector: 128.

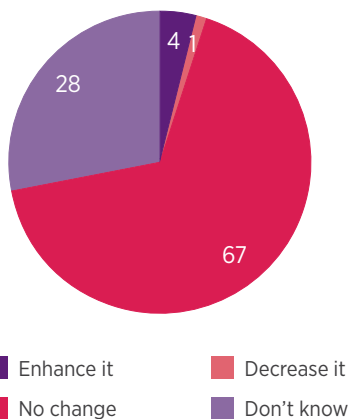
Note: Figures may not sum to 100 because of rounding.

Table 3: Paternity pay policy in organisations (%)

	All	Private sector	Public sector	Voluntary sector
Statutory minimum requirement (2 weeks' paternity pay at £139.58 per week or 90% of average weekly earnings if less)	49	54	30	45
2 weeks' enhanced paternity pay at/near full rate of pay	18	15	29	26
More than 2 weeks' enhanced paternity pay at/near full rate of pay	8	7	12	7
1 week enhanced paternity pay at/near full rate of pay followed by 1 week paid at statutory rate	6	6	7	8
Other	3	3	3	5
Don't know	16	15	20	10

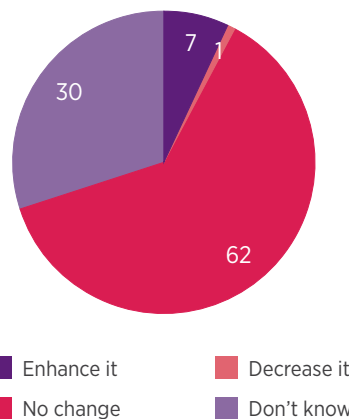
Base: All: 1,046; private sector: 687; public sector: 231; voluntary sector: 128.
 Note: Figures may not sum to 100 because of rounding.

Figure 1 Changes to organisations' maternity pay policy in the next two years (%)



Base: All: 1,047

Figure 2 Changes to organisations' paternity pay policy in the next two years (%)



Base: All: 1,050

organisations paying two weeks' enhanced paternity pay at or near the full rate of pay, compared with 15% of private sector organisations.

We asked employers whether or not they plan to make any changes to their maternity and

paternity provision in the next two years and the majority predict no change to either their maternity or paternity pay policy (67% and 62%, respectively), although a significant minority don't know at this stage. Just 4% of employers plan to enhance their maternity pay policy

during this period, while 7% predict an enhancement to their paternity pay policy; conversely, a mere 1% of employers plan to decrease either policy (see Figures 1 and 2).

Arrangements for workload cover during maternity and shared parental leave

It's good practice for an employer to ensure that line managers plan effectively to put in place adequate arrangements to cover an employee's workload when they are on maternity or shared parental leave. Typically, this type of leave will involve a considerable period of leave from the workplace and there could be all sorts of detrimental effects if the manager fails to proactively arrange appropriate cover, including disruption to customer service, failure to meet operational targets and additional pressure on the rest of the team. An ad hoc and reactive approach to workload cover will do nothing to foster an inclusive and supportive culture for working parents. If the organisation requires responsibility for the absent employee's workload

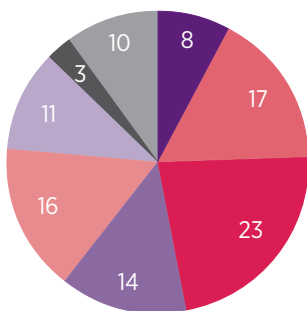
to be dispersed across other team members, this should be carefully planned and communicated in consultation with the individual taking on the additional work, and managed within the context of their existing role and responsibilities.

The arrangements that a line manager makes for covering workload will vary according to the type of role that the absent employee occupies as well as the level of resources available to that part of the business. One of the most desirable solutions is to fill the post on a temporary basis so that the absent employee's duties can continue with minimal disruption. A replacement can either take the form of an internal secondment or a temporary external resource such as a consultant or a temporary worker sourced through an agency.

According to our findings, six organisations in ten (61%) employ temporary workers, to varying extents, to cover women taking maternity leave within their permanent workforce, although just 8% of these employers 'always' do so. A further 16% spread the workload among existing workers and 11% never employ temporary workers (see Figure 3).

Our research finds that a much lower proportion of just one organisation in five (21%) employs temporary workers, to varying extents, to cover men taking shared parental leave within their permanent workforce, with a mere 3% of these employers 'always' doing so. Almost three in ten (28%) spread the workload among existing workers and 12% never employ temporary workers (see Figure 4).

Figure 3 Does your organisation employ temporary workers to cover women taking maternity leave within your permanent workforce? (%)



Base: All: 1,050

Note: Figures may not sum to 100 because of rounding.

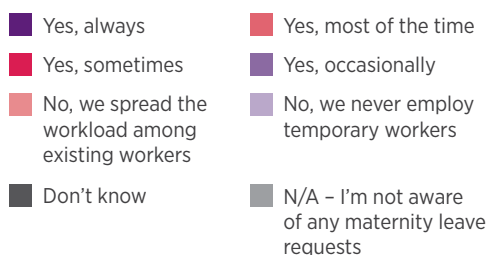
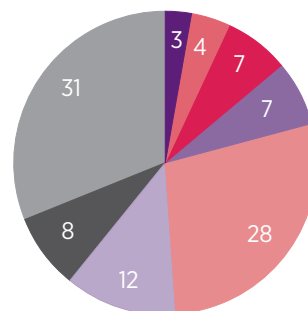


Figure 4 Does your organisation employ temporary workers to cover men taking shared parental leave within your permanent workforce? (%)



Base: All: 1,047

Note: Figures may not sum to 100 because of rounding.



Keeping in touch with employees

Legally, there is provision to help an employer and new parent to maintain contact during their maternity, adoption or additional paternity leave. This means that employees can work up to ten days – known as keeping-in-touch (KIT) days – during this type of leave. KIT days are optional, and both the individual and the employer need to agree to them. The employee's right to maternity, adoption or additional paternity leave and pay isn't affected by taking KIT days. The Government's advice is that the type of work and pay employees get should be agreed before they come into work (www.gov.uk/employee-rights-when-on-leave).

There is also statutory provision for shared parental leave in touch (SPLIT) days where an employee can work up to 20 days during SPL without bringing it to an end. SPLIT days are in addition to the ten KIT days already available to those on maternity or adoption leave (www.gov.uk/shared-parental-leave-and-pay-employer-guide/starting-

shared-parental-leave). The Acas good practice guide on shared parental leave says that SPLIT days are suitable for situations where *'both parties feel it would be beneficial for the employee to attend a work-related activity, for example a training session or a team meeting, or to work part of a week to help the employee return to their role in a gradual way'*. It recommends that both parties should be clear about the employee's level of pay for working a SPLIT day and whether the contractual pay will top up the statutory shared parental pay (ShPP) to full pay or whether the contractual pay will be in addition to the week's ShPP (Acas n.d.).

The rationale underlying KIT days is sound and enables employees to maintain an ongoing relationship while on leave with their new child. However, our survey finds that the majority of employers do not encourage the use of KIT days during maternity, adoption or additional paternity leave. Around four organisations in ten (39%) encourage their use in the case of female employees, while three in

ten (29%) do so in the case of male employees (see Table 4). The most common approach is to 'leave it entirely up to the employee' – 40% of organisations in the case of female employees and 41% in the case of male employees.

From one perspective this passive approach recognises that KIT days are optional and an employer cannot mandate an employee to participate in them. However, KIT days should be a core element of an employer's strategy to build an inclusive working environment for working parents and encourage their return to work. Therefore, it could help the organisation's staff retention aims if it is proactive in encouraging the use of KIT days and their potential benefits to employees, such as keeping them informed of organisational developments, maintaining working relationships, undertaking training and development and aiding any planning conversations about potential flexible working and/or workload arrangements on their return to work.

Table 4: Is it company policy to encourage men and women to take the optional KIT days during maternity, adoption or additional paternity leave? (%)

	Men				Women			
	All	Private sector	Public sector	Voluntary sector	All	Private sector	Public sector	Voluntary sector
We allow it but don't encourage it	7	8	6	0	7	8	5	2
We encourage it	29	26	38	38	39	35	52	50
We leave it entirely up to the employee	41	43	36	37	40	42	36	37
Don't know	22	23	20	25	13	15	7	11

Base: All: 1,042; private sector: 686; public sector: 231; voluntary sector: 125.

Base: All: 1,049; private sector: 689; public sector: 232; voluntary sector: 128.

Note: Figures may not sum to 100 because of rounding.

2 Shared parental leave

‘Many working parents could be discouraged from taking up their entitlement to SPL for financial reasons.’

The introduction in 2014 (for parents of children due on or after 5 April 2015) of shared parental leave (SPL) heralded a new way for parents to share statutory leave and pay on the arrival of a new child. It provides working parents and adopters with more flexibility over how they can share and balance their caring responsibilities in a way that suits their individual circumstances. It was implemented with the twin aims of supporting a culture change to enable more men to take an active role in fatherhood in the first year of their child’s life while at the same time supporting working women who want to have a family and a career.

In its ‘Modern Workplaces’ consultation (impact assessment) on shared parental leave and pay, the then Department for Business, Innovation and Skills stated the aims of the new policy as seeking to:

- ‘give parents more choice and flexibility in how they care for their child in the first year by increasing the share of leave fathers can take, thus enabling both parents to retain a strong link with the labour market;
- ‘encourage more fathers to play a greater caring role (pre-birth and in the first year) via a right to attend antenatal appointments and longer, more flexible shared leave;

- ‘increase flexibility for employers and employees to reach agreement on how best to balance work and domestic needs without state interference’ (BIS 2013).

SPL offers a flexible framework for new parents – a new mother can end her maternity leave and share up to 50 weeks’ leave with her partner; the same provision applies to adoptive parents. SPL can be taken separately or at the same time by the working parents and can be taken in blocks of leave or as one continuous period of leave. The minimum period of leave is one week and it must be taken in multiples of complete weeks. This means that a new mother can end her maternity leave, return to work and subsequently take SPL at a later date.

Shared parental leave is less financially attractive

The complex rules for implementing shared parental leave (SPL) have been criticised; in addition, many working parents could be discouraged from taking up their entitlement to SPL for financial reasons.

Statutory maternity pay (SMP) is paid to eligible female employees for up to 39 weeks and comprises 90% of the employee’s average weekly earnings (before tax) for the first 6 weeks followed by £139.58 per week or 90% of the employee’s average weekly earnings (whichever is lower) for the next 33 weeks. However, statutory shared

parental pay (ShPP) is paid for 37 weeks at the *lower* of the statutory prescribed rate (currently set at £139.58 for statutory maternity and paternity pay) or 90% of the relevant parent's normal weekly earnings (subject to the lower earnings limit). The remaining 13 weeks of SPL are unpaid. This means that ShPP is paid at the lower level throughout the leave period and, unlike SMP, there is no provision for the first six weeks to be paid at 90% of the parent's actual weekly earnings. This is the case even if the mother returns from maternity leave after only two weeks, during the period where the higher level of maternity pay would have been available to her (CIPD 2015a).

A key factor in working parents' decision will be whether or not their employer enhances ShPP to a similar level to maternity pay. Of course, some employers may opt to enhance the level of ShPP they pay to their employees but there is no statutory requirement for them to pay it at the same rate as any enhanced maternity pay. In 2015, the CIPD commented that *'it's crucial for this to be a focus now, as failure to match payments to mothers and fathers may well lead to claims of sex discrimination'* (CIPD 2015b).

It seems that this event has now come to pass with the first employment tribunal ruling on SPL. In Scotland, a male Network Rail employee was awarded £28,321 following his discrimination complaint over SPL after his employer refused to pay his SPL at the same rate as his wife, who was employed by the same company.

In *Snell v Network Rail*, both the claimant and his wife were employed by Network Rail (Wilkins 2016). The tribunal established that the male claimant was indirectly discriminated against in relation to his sex by the operation of Network Rail's family-friendly policy. While the case has established that unequal pay within the parameters of shared parental pay is likely to be unacceptable, *'it provides little clarity on the far more complex question of whether it is acceptable to enhance maternity pay while offering paternity pay and shared parental pay at the statutory rate.'* Following the case, Network Rail equalised the situation by removing its enhancement to mothers' payments.

Take-up of SPL

According to our findings, one organisation in five (21%) had received requests from male employees to take up the right to shared parental leave (SPL) since April 2015 (see Table 5).

One organisation
in five

21%

According to our findings, one organisation in five (21%) had received requests from male employees to take up the right to shared parental leave (SPL) since April 2015.

Table 5: Has your organisation had any requests from male employees to take up the right to SPL since April 2015? (%)

	All	Private sector	Public sector	Voluntary sector
Yes	21	17	36	15
No	59	65	37	64
Don't know	19	17	26	21

Base: All: 1,050; private sector: 689; public sector: 233; voluntary sector: 128.

Note: Figures may not sum to 100 because of rounding.

This percentage rises to 36% for public sector employers compared with 17% of private sector and 15% of voluntary sector employers.

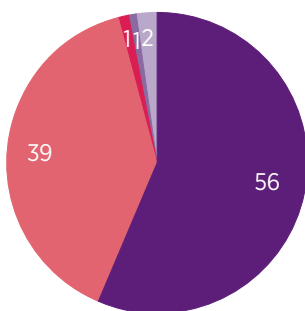
Among the 353 respondents who indicated that their organisation had at least one new dad who was eligible for SPL since April 2015, well over half (56%) said that no new dads had taken up their right to SPL (see Figure 5). A further four in ten (39%) reported that between 1% and 20% of eligible new dads had taken up their right to SPL (21-40%: 1%; 41-60%: 1%; 61-80%:

0%; 81-100%; 2%). This means that, on average, 5% of these new dads who were eligible for SPL had taken up their right – this percentage dips to 4% in the case of organisations in the private sector but rises significantly to 13% for public sector organisations.

Among the 357 respondents who indicated that their organisation had at least one new mother who was eligible for SPL since April 2015, a higher proportion of two-thirds (67%) said that no new mothers had taken up their right to SPL (see

Figure 6). A further quarter (23%) reported that between 1% and 20% of eligible new mums had taken up their right to SPL (21-40%: 1%; 41-60%: 1%; 61-80%: 3%; 81-100%: 4%). On average, 8% of these new mothers who were eligible for SPL had taken up their right – this time there is little variation according to broad sector, with 8% in the case of private sector organisations compared with 10% of public sector and 8% of voluntary sector organisations.

Figure 5 Proportion of new dads who have taken up their right to SPL (% of employers)



Base: All: 353
Note: Figures may not sum to 100 because of rounding.

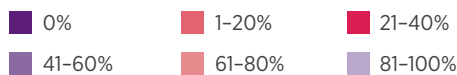
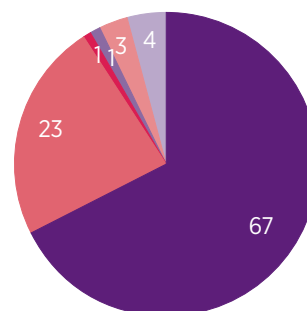
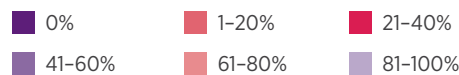


Figure 6 Proportion of new mothers who have taken up their right to SPL (% of employers)



Base: All: 357
Note: Figures may not sum to 100 because of rounding.



3 Future government changes for working parents

There are a number of public policy developments on the horizon that will impact on workplace provision to support working parents. The CIPD was keen to explore employers' level of awareness about these planned changes, as well as their perceived effectiveness on a practical level.

Grandparents' leave: a positive step?

The former Chancellor George Osborne first announced the Government's intention to extend the right to shared parental leave (SPL) and pay to working grandparents from 2018 (now likely to be 2020) at the Conservative Party Conference in October 2015 (HM Treasury 2015). The Government said that it recognises the crucial role

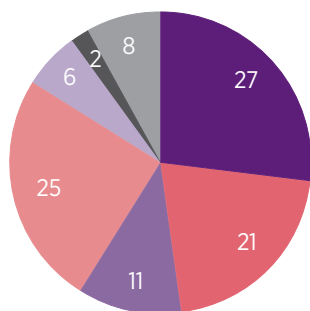
that working grandparents play in providing childcare and that *'nearly two million grandparents have given up work, reduced their hours or have taken time off to help families who cannot afford childcare costs.'* Further evidence cited include the findings that more than half of mothers rely on grandparents for childcare when they first go back to work after maternity leave, and that more than 60% of working grandparents with grandchildren aged under 16 provide some childcare.

In its March 2016 Budget, the Government reaffirmed its commitment to launch a consultation (in May 2016) on these proposals (HM Treasury 2016a). Since then, however, we have had a change of

prime minister and no consultation has been published – although, so far, there has been no indication that the Government will not carry forward the proposals for extending SPL and pay to grandparents.

Our findings on respondents' reactions to the extension of SPL and pay to working grandparents are mixed, with a quarter (27%) saying it's a positive step as many mothers rely on grandparents for childcare when they first go back to work after maternity leave and around the same proportion (25%) indicating that SPL for mums and dads is a good idea but extending this to grandparents is a step too far (see Figure 7). Although just 6% of respondents believe that 'SPL

Figure 7 Views on government's plans to extend SPL and pay to grandparents by 2020¹ (%)



Base: All: 1,050

¹ Respondents were asked to choose one statement that they most agreed with.

is a bad idea full stop, a further one in five (21%) say it's a good idea in principle but will create a considerable administrative burden in practice, while around one in ten (11%) think that organisations need more time to get used to managing SPL between mums and dads before it's extended to grandparents.

It should also be remembered that working grandparents who want more flexibility in their working arrangements to help care for grandchildren can apply for flexible working since the statutory right to request was extended to all employees in June 2014.

Does government policy on free childcare hit the right spot?

Currently, all three- and four-year-olds are entitled to 570 hours of free early education or childcare a year, usually taken as 15 hours a week for 38 weeks of the year. Some two-

year-olds are also eligible if one of their parents is claiming a benefit such as Jobseekers Allowance.

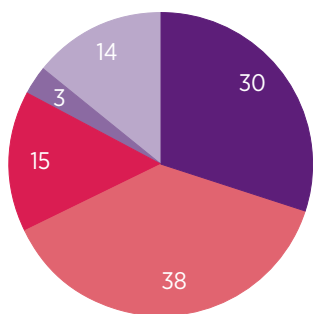
The Government plans to extend the entitlement to 30 hours of free childcare for working parents of three- and four-year-olds from 2017 and is currently undertaking pilots. In principle, additional financial support for childcare for working parents should be welcomed, but some stakeholders have expressed a number of concerns about the implementation and impact of the new provision, including concerns by childcare providers about the levels of funding that will be available (Public Accounts Committee 2016).

Aside from concerns about funding and the capacity of early years providers to offer enough places to fulfil the Government's aims for the 30-hour free childcare entitlement, there could be another unintended

impact of this policy. The absence of funding for young children from birth to two (aside from disadvantaged two-year-olds) does not encourage women to return to work immediately after maternity leave. Our survey findings support this perspective.

We asked our survey respondents the extent to which they think the participation rate of women with young children at work would improve if the same level of free childcare support were given for children aged up to two years alongside the current government policy to give free childcare support for three- and four-year-olds; three in ten (30%) said it would improve to a 'large extent' and almost a further four in ten (38%) said it would improve to 'some extent' (see Figure 8). Just 15% said it would make no difference, while 3% said it would make the situation worse; a further 14% didn't know.

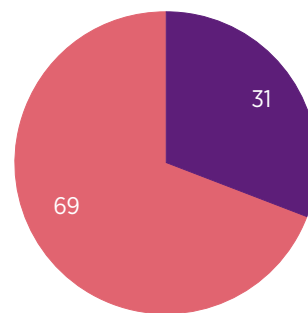
Figure 8 To what extent do you think the participation rate of women with young children at work would improve if the same level of free childcare support were given for children aged up to two years alongside the current government policy to give free childcare support for three- and four-year-olds? (%)



■ A large extent ■ Some extent
 ■ It would make no difference. ■ It would make the situation worse.
 ■ Don't know

Base: All: 1,050

Figure 9 Are you aware of Tax-Free Childcare, a new form of government support for childcare to be introduced in 2017, which will gradually replace childcare vouchers? (%)



■ Yes ■ No

Base: All: 1,050

Childcare vouchers versus Tax-Free Childcare

One way in which employers can help working parents with childcare costs is by offering childcare vouchers, worth up to £55 per week depending on earnings and date of joining the scheme. Childcare vouchers are not liable for tax and National Insurance payments and this 'opt-in', 'employer-supported' scheme has proved a popular benefit with employers and employees alike over the years.

Our research shows that more than four employers in ten (42%) have retained their existing childcare voucher provision via salary sacrifice as it stands over the past 12 months, rising to 50% in the case of public sector employers (see Table 6). Just over one-third (35%) of all employers don't offer a childcare voucher scheme, while a further 3% have introduced a new childcare offering; 1% have enhanced it and 1% have made cuts to it. No employers have removed their scheme, but 18% don't know about any changes.

From early 2017, the Government plans to launch Tax-Free Childcare (TFC), its new initiative to help working parents with the cost of childcare. Described as a 'top-up' scheme and operated by the individual through an online account, for every £8 a parent pays in, the Government says it will pay in an additional £2. Parents can receive up to £2,000 per child per year towards their childcare costs, rising to £4,000 for disabled children (HM Treasury 2016b). To qualify, parents will have to be in work with each parent earning at least £115 a week but not more than £100,000 a year. Unlike the childcare voucher scheme, self-employed parents will also be eligible for TFC. TFC will be available for children up to the age of 12, or 17 in the case of disabled children.

Working parents don't have to switch to TFC if they don't want to as the current childcare voucher scheme will remain open to new entrants until April 2018, and parents already registered by this date will be able to continue using it for as long as their

employer offers it. The scheme will be rolled out gradually to families, with parents of the youngest children able to apply first.

According to our survey findings, the overwhelming majority (69%) of respondents reported that they were unaware of the new TFC scheme coming on stream early in 2017, with the remaining 31% saying they were aware of it (see Figure 9). There is not much time before the scheme is introduced, and so employers and working parents need to start planning now for its introduction. It is vital that employers develop a communication plan to inform working parents about the changes coming on stream – this is particularly salient for those employers who will be faced with the prospect of communicating two tandem childcare schemes to employees at the same time. The Government has some further work to do here in raising awareness and understanding of the new arrangements among employers and working parents.

Table 6: Changes made to employers' childcare voucher provision via salary sacrifice during past 12 months (%)

	All	Private sector	Public sector	Voluntary sector
We have retained our existing childcare voucher offering as it stands.	42	39	50	42
Not applicable – we don't offer childcare vouchers.	35	39	17	43
We have introduced a new childcare voucher offering.	3	4	1	4
We have enhanced our childcare voucher offering.	1	1	2	0
We have made cuts to our childcare voucher offering.	1	0	2	0
We have removed our childcare voucher offering.	0	0	1	0
Don't know	18	16	27	11

Base: All: 1,050; private sector: 689; public sector: 233; voluntary sector: 128.

Note: Figures may not sum to 100 because of rounding.

4 A broader organisational strategy for parents and carers

More strategic support for working parents

We asked respondents about the wider types of organisational support for employees with caring responsibilities in their organisation. Given that there are so many ways in which employers can help working parents – and not all of them involving a financial commitment from the employer – the findings paint a disappointing picture of the support available. A third of organisations (33%) don't offer any of the ten listed types of provision

suitable for working parents; this proportion rises to 39% in the case of private sector employers, although it does fall to 14% for public sector and 25% for voluntary sector employers (see Table 7).

The most common type of support is for the organisation to proactively promote flexible working options such as job-share, term-time working and part-time hours, although just three employers in ten (30%) indicated that they provide this type of support. The right to request

flexible working was introduced for carers and working parents with children up to age 6 in 2003 and expanded to cover parents of children aged 16 and under in 2009. Given the considerable length of time that this legislation has now been in force, and the widely recognised benefits of enabling working parents to balance work and childcare – including better employee attendance, engagement, loyalty and retention – it's not encouraging that less than a third of organisations are proactive in promoting flexible working provision.

Table 7: Organisational support for employees with caring responsibilities (%)

	All	Private sector	Public sector	Voluntary sector
Proactively promote flexible working options such as job-share, term-time working and part-time hours	30	24	45	46
Support parents with school drop-off and pick-up, for example homeworking or flexible start/finish times	25	22	27	41
Health and well-being support for working parents and carers, for example mentoring/counselling	20	15	33	34
Option to buy additional days' leave to care for children or elderly relatives	13	12	16	13
A childcare policy covering the range of support provided to working parents	11	9	19	8
An on-site nursery for working parents	5	2	16	3
Other financial support, for example a one-off payment or 'money-off' vouchers	5	5	5	1
Childcare search to help employees find suitable and affordable childcare places	4	3	7	0
Subsidised places at play schemes in the school holidays	3	3	7	2
An eldercare policy covering the range of support provided to carers	3	2	8	2
Back-up childcare provision for when childcare arrangements break down	2	2	3	1
Other	2	1	3	6
None of these	33	39	14	25
Don't know	10	10	12	7

Base: All: 1,050; private sector: 689; public sector: 233; voluntary sector: 128.

The proportion of public and voluntary sector employers that are proactive in this area is higher (at 45% and 46%, respectively, compared with 24% of private sector employers).

Supporting parents with school drop-off and pick-up, for example providing homeworking or flexible start and/or finish times, is the next most common type of organisational support, offered by 25% of employers overall. This proportion significantly rises to 41% for voluntary sector organisations (27% in the case of public sector organisations) but dips to 22% in the private sector.

The third most common type of organisational provision is health and well-being support for working parents and carers, such as mentoring or counselling, offered by one employer in five (20%). Again, private sector organisations are significantly less likely to provide this type of organisational support (15%, compared with 33% of public sector organisations and 34% of voluntary sector organisations).

The other types of organisational support for working parents listed in the survey are rarely offered, according to respondents: for example, overall, 13% offer the option to buy additional days' leave to care for children or elderly relatives; 5% have an on-site nursery for working parents; 5% provide other financial support such as a one-off payment or 'money-off' vouchers; 4% carry out a childcare search to help employees find suitable and affordable childcare places; 3% provide subsidised places at play schemes in the school

holidays; and 2% offer back-up childcare provision for when childcare arrangements break down.

Provision for people with eldercare responsibilities

As the population ages, a rising number of people at work have ageing parents or relatives who need some degree of care and responsibility for organising, or even carrying out this care, is increasingly falling on these employees. This demographic shift is creating an extra pressure on these individuals, who have to balance their own working life with the practical and emotional care responsibilities placed on them. A significant proportion of people – the so-called 'sandwich generation' – may be caring for young children *and* elderly or ill parents or partners. In general, it is women who tend to carry a disproportionate level of responsibility for care. A 2014 UK Government report notes that *'many people with caring responsibilities can and do balance work and care, but the more intense the caring, the more difficult this becomes'* (DWP 2014).

Employers therefore need to make a concerted and strategic effort to ensure that they create the right framework of policies, as well as a supportive culture, to help people to balance work and caring demands. Typically, the most effective type of support is likely to take the form of flexibility in working hours and/or the ability to take time off work – although sometimes these adjustments can be small scale and still make a significant difference to an employee's ability to reconcile their work and caring

'A significant proportion of people – the so-called "sandwich generation" – may be caring for young children *and* elderly or ill parents or partners.'

roles (CIPD 2016b). The often unpredictable demands that are placed on people when caring for a relative who is ill and/or old means that many organisations will need to think more creatively about the kind of support and flexibility that employees in this position may need. Employers could also consider providing a wider range of support such as access to practical, expert sources of advice, support networks and counselling services.

This research shows that employers have a long way to go to develop a cohesive and strategic offering to support employees with these kinds of caring responsibilities – just 3% have an eldercare policy covering the range of support provided to

carers (see Table 7). It's possible that the three employers in ten (30%) who said they proactively promote flexible working options such as job-share, term-time working and part-time hours could be directing some of this support at employees with eldercare responsibilities. Similarly, it's possible that the one employer in five (20%) who indicated that they provide health and well-being support for working parents and carers, such as mentoring or counselling, could offer this to staff who look after elderly relatives.

Regardless, if just 3% have a dedicated policy dealing with this issue, it's safe to assume that there is scope for many organisations to up their game in terms of providing and

communicating a comprehensive package of support for employees with eldercare responsibilities. The longer-term gain for employers who take this step could be their enhanced retention of valuable skills and talent as many more people start to assume caring responsibilities in line with the population's increased longevity.

Conclusions

Around half of the UK workforce now comprises women, and their increased participation in the labour market has changed the traditional models of working families. During this century alone there has been a decline in the pattern of *'the British 1.5 earner household where the father works full-time and the mother part-time'* and, even in that model, the working hours of the father have dropped while the mother's have increased (Connolly et al 2013). The growing trend for working families is for income generation to be the responsibility of both working parents; the traditional, full-time 'male sole breadwinner model is well and truly behind us' and now accounts for less than a quarter (22%) of households.

Given the very high proportion of working men and women who are parents, it makes sense from a societal and employment perspective to develop an effective framework to support their need to balance work and childcare. We are also experiencing a cultural shift where it is evident that more working fathers want to be more involved in bringing up their children. Employers that put in place a cohesive set of policies and initiatives to help working parents to achieve a good balance between the demands of work and family life are likely to reap considerable benefits in terms of better levels of employee well-being, engagement, commitment, loyalty, retention and productivity.

Fostering the right culture for working parents

Good maternity, paternity and parental leave practices that are coherent and inclusive and communicated effectively to everyone should form the bedrock of an organisation's strategy to nurture a family-friendly workplace for working parents. The UK's statutory framework for maternity leave and pay is well established and significantly more generous than that in place for most European countries. The fact that the most common type of approach (48% of employers) is to provide the statutory minimum requirement still indicates that women on maternity leave can now enjoy considerably better provision than was the case many years ago. Public sector employers stand out in terms of enhancing the contractual maternity pay they offer to their female staff. Only a minority of employers enhance the statutory entitlement offered to new fathers in relation to paternity leave and pay.

Ensuring that an employer complies with the legal requirements concerning maternity and paternity provision is a fundamental first step. However, good practice in this area goes far beyond mere compliance. An organisation that is able to offer more generous contractual entitlements could gain a lot in terms of increased commitment and loyalty from the employees who benefit from these policies, but not every employer

'Around half of the UK workforce now comprises women, and their increased participation in the labour market has changed the traditional models of working families.'

is in a position to offer above the minimum leave and pay thresholds. However, there are many other approaches that an employer can adopt to signal the value it places on working parents. These include having comprehensive maternity and paternity policies and ensuring that employees are aware of them and line managers are trained in their effective implementation. Maternity and paternity provision can be complex and so these should set out clearly and in detail both the employer's and employee's legal obligations.

Keeping-in-touch (KIT) days offer a valuable means of maintaining a working relationship when an employee is on leave with their child. The rationale underlying KIT days is sound: if a working parent is away from work for many months, it would be easy for them to feel disengaged from the workplace and apprehensive about returning after a long period of absence. It is in both the individual's and employer's interest to maintain contact and involvement with each other throughout this period. KIT days offer the opportunity for employees to maintain a sense of commitment to the organisation and potentially feel more inclined to return after their leave. Their promotion can send a positive message to an employee on leave that they are a valued member of the team, and can also mean that the returning parent is likely to settle in more quickly on their return. Therefore, employers should promote the use of KIT days where employees are prepared to participate in them. However, our survey finds that the majority of employers do not encourage the

use of KIT days during maternity, adoption or additional paternity leave.

Policies and procedures around maternity and paternity are very important, but employers also need to foster a wider culture of gender equality and inclusivity. There is evidence that many organisations don't find it easy to retain female talent, particularly where women have been on maternity leave and don't feel that the workplace represents a welcoming and supportive environment. Too often, still, childcare is viewed as a 'women's issue' in organisations and there is a lack of legitimacy around the juggling act that most working parents experience on a day-to-day basis. Good practice in handling pregnancy, maternity and paternity lays the groundwork for developing a culture that promotes equality and fairness for working parents.

Shared parental leave provision could be improved

In principle, the greater flexibility potentially afforded to working parents by shared parental leave (SPL) and the impetus it can give to new fathers, in particular, to share the responsibility of childrearing during the very early months are to be welcomed. It's a positive development for the increasing number of fathers who want to be more hands-on in looking after their young children. However, the rules for implementing SPL – for example, in terms of eligibility and notification requirements – have been criticised for their complexity and could act as a barrier to the wider take-up of SPL by employees and support for it among employers.

Further, many working parents could be inhibited from taking up their entitlement to shared parental leave for financial reasons.

Overall, on average 5% of new dads and 8% of new mothers who were eligible for SPL had taken up their right since April 2015, according to this survey. Although these figures are within the expected take-up range predicted by the Government when it introduced SPL and pay, there is still considerable scope to improve the impact that this new legislation has in shaping the involvement of both parents in caring and helping them to achieve a better balance between work and supporting a new family.

In its March 2016 Budget, the Government affirmed its commitment to launch a consultation on 'grandparents leave', stating that the consultation *'will also cover options for streamlining the [SPL] system, including simplifying the eligibility requirements and notification system, and will explore the potential to make better use of digital technology'* (HM Treasury 2016a).

The survey shows that, while just over a quarter (27%) of employers are in favour of extending SPL and pay to grandparents, a further 21% say it's a good idea in principle but will create a considerable administrative burden in practice. A further 11% of organisations believe employers need more time to get used to managing SPL between mums and dads before extending it to grandparents and 25% think such an extension is a step too far. Based on this evidence, the CIPD believes the Government should

think carefully before extending SPL to grandparents and should instead concentrate on increasing the uptake of SPL by mums and dads. There is merit in the idea of extending SPL to grandparents in the future but policy-makers should ensure the timing is right or risk undermining the progress and uptake of SPL.

Employers – and employees – who may have been deterred from taking advantage of SPL because of the complex rules associated with its implementation will have welcomed the intention to consult on their simplification in the consultation. We look forward to this consultation as an opportunity to improve the implementation of the current SPL and pay provision in the hope that a greater number of working parents will feel able to take advantage of the potential flexibility it could afford them. So far, the low take-up of SPL by new dads will do nothing to shift the cultural perception of childcare being seen as a ‘women’s issue’.

Changes afoot for childcare support

Any investment to support working parents with childcare costs and their ability to work should be a positive step. However, an inquiry into the free entitlement to early years’ education by Parliament’s Public Accounts Committee highlights a range of risks identified by the National Audit Office to the successful implementation of the new 30-hour entitlement (Public Accounts Committee 2016). These include concerns by childcare providers about the levels of funding that will be available and the possibility that providers

could choose to offer additional hours to three- and four-year-olds by reducing the number of places offered to disadvantaged two-year-olds. The inquiry notes that this *‘would jeopardise the Department’s aims to improve educational and other outcomes for the very children who could benefit most from free childcare.’*

A survey by the Pre-school Learning Alliance supports this perspective, with half of childcare providers fearing forced closure as a result of the 30-hour free entitlement offer (Pre-school Learning Alliance 2016). It also found that half of providers would offer fewer places to children of other ages if they did deliver the extended entitlement.

Our survey highlights another unintended impact of the Government’s 30-hour free childcare entitlement policy – the overwhelming majority of respondents agree that the continued absence of funding for young children from birth to two (aside from disadvantaged two-year-olds) does not encourage women to return to work immediately after maternity leave. Employers, supported by government policy, should make every effort to retain new mothers in the workplace – once women leave the labour market it can become much harder for them to return to it at a later date.

From early 2017, the Government plans to launch Tax-Free Childcare (TFC), its new initiative to help working parents with the cost of childcare. According to our survey findings, the overwhelming majority (69%) of respondents were unaware

‘From early 2017, the Government plans to launch Tax-Free Childcare (TFC), its new initiative to help working parents with the cost of childcare.’

of the new TFC scheme coming on stream early in 2017, with the remaining 31% saying they were aware of it. There is only a short amount of time before the scheme is introduced, and so employers and working parents need to start planning now for its introduction. Clearly, the Government has some work to do in raising awareness and understanding of the new arrangements.

Our findings give weight to the CIPD's policy call in its Manifesto for Work to develop a national strategy on childcare, aimed at delivering improved access to good-quality, affordable childcare in ten years. The lack of awareness and readiness among employers for some of the impending childcare policy changes, together with their potential unintended impact in some areas, underline the need for a national, joined-up approach to childcare that encompasses all relevant government departments, the business community and other interested stakeholders.

A more cohesive offering by employers

When we asked respondents about the wider types of organisational support for employees with caring responsibilities in their organisation, the results were not encouraging; a third of organisations (33%) don't offer any of the ten listed types of provision aimed at working parents. While recognising that there are those UK employers who work hard to build genuinely supportive family-friendly practices and cultures, this survey shows that many employers do not see childcare as a strategic business issue that can considerably affect their access to skills and talent. A lack of awareness and action in this area will not only impact on women's participation in, and progression at, work. With more and more working fathers seeking active involvement in bringing up their children, it is the well-being, engagement and retention of both genders that are at stake. It is not an abstract claim to add that the productivity and competitiveness of the UK economy is also at stake.

Background to the survey

Respondent profile

Table 8: Breakdown of the sample, by sector (%)

Sector	Summer 2016	Spring 2016	Winter 2015-16	Autumn 2015	Summer 2015	Spring 2015	Winter 2014-15	Autumn 2014
Private	73	73	73	73	73	73	73	73
Public	21	21	21	21	21	21	21	21
Voluntary	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
N	1,050	1,014	1,007	1,037	931	1,013	1,003	1,089

Table 9: Breakdown of the sample, by number of employees in organisation (%)

	Summer 2016	Spring 2016	Winter 2015-16	Autumn 2015	Summer 2015	Spring 2015	Winter 2014-15	Autumn 2014
2-9	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14
10-49	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14
50-99	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
100-249	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
250-499	8	8	8	9	9	8	9	10
500-999	8	6	8	8	5	6	7	8
1,000-4,999	17	16	17	17	16	18	15	18
5,000-9,999	6	7	9	7	8	7	8	8
10,000-19,999	6	5	5	5	5	5	4	4
20,000 or more	14	16	12	14	15	15	15	13
N	1,050	1,014	1,007	1,037	931	1,013	1,003	1,089

Survey method

The fieldwork for the LMO survey is managed by YouGov Plc. This survey has been conducted using the bespoke YouGov online system, administered to members of the YouGov Plc UK panel who have agreed to take part in surveys, and the CIPD membership.

The survey is based on responses from 1,050 HR professionals and employers carried out between 10 June and 3 July 2016. All respondents have HR responsibility within their organisation, which may or may not be their sole and primary function within their organisation. The sample is targeted to senior business leaders of senior officer level and above.

An email was sent to each respondent from the YouGov sample, who are selected at random from the base sample according to the sample definition, inviting them to take part in the survey and providing a link to the survey. Each member of the CIPD sample is invited to complete the survey. Respondents are given three weeks to reply and reminder emails are sent to boost response rates (subject to the CIPD's re-contact policy).

Weighting

The quarterly LMO survey is sampled from the CIPD membership and through the YouGov panel of HR professionals. The data is weighted to be representative of the UK public and private sector business population by size of employer and sector. Rim weighting is applied using targets drawn from the *Business Population Estimates for the UK and Regions 2012* (available at: www.gov.uk/government/statistics/businesspopulation-estimates-for-the-uk-andregions-2012). The delivered sample is drawn from across all business sizes and in total 527 unweighted responses were received from small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and 523 from HR professionals within large employers (250+ employees).

Note: YouGov's raw data is produced to two decimal places and within the data tables each percentage is rounded to the nearest whole number. The nets are calculated using the raw data (that is, two decimal places) and then also rounded to the nearest whole number. As a result of this rounding process, there may be instances in the report where figures do not add up to the expected total.

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CIPD

Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development
151 The Broadway London SW19 1JQ United Kingdom
T +44 (0)20 8612 6200 **F** +44 (0)20 8612 6201
E cipd@cipd.co.uk **W** cipd.co.uk

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