

## Case study: CIPD Parent Returner Programme

### Burberry

#### Profile

**Size:** 10,000 employees worldwide.

**Location:** Burberry operate in over 40 countries, with Head Offices in London, New York and Hong Kong.

**Sector:** Private sector luxury fashion retailer.

**People function:** Global HR function with centralised ER, Talent, Reward, D&I and L&D functions in London head office, HR shared service centre in Leeds and field-based HRBPs.

**Key fact:** 65% female employees, typically 1-2% take maternity leave in any year.

#### Operational context

Burberry is a 164-year-old former family business, founded by a 21 year old Thomas Burberry in 1856. It was first listed on the London Stock Exchange in 2002, and since then has grown into a global employer.

Recently, the Company have focused new energy into a review of their people policies, to make sure they properly reflected the company's aspirations to be an employer of choice. The opportunity to join the CIPD group came at a perfect time.

#### Problem

In common with many organisations, Burberry recognises that retaining employees through the transition to parenthood is key to ensuring it can retain its pipeline of future talent. Examination of attrition throughout the employee lifecycle showed increases in the six months following the return to work following maternity leave.

The company are proud of their strong record of female leadership, and have been recognised in the Hampton-Alexander Report as a FTSE 100 leader for gender balance on both their Board and senior leadership teams, and they strive to create a working environment that is truly open and inclusive. They are keen to protect their pipeline of future leaders by retaining employees who become parents, and therefore needed to find a way to further support employees who become parents and attract future leaders to the organisation.

Additionally, as a global employer, there was a desire to create a consistent global standard, to ensure that all employees could benefit from the company's support when they became parents.

#### What they did

Knowing that evidence shows that increasing paid leave and support on return is an effective retention tool for new parents, Burberry sought to introduce a standard minimum offer which equalised their approach across the global network, enabling all parents to take time with their new families and phase their return to work.

The process began with a phase of expansive research and analysis, including:

- analysis of existing parental leave policies across all the countries in which the organisation operates
- analysis of the benefits offered by their competitors for talent
- research into the benefits of increased leave and the approach taken by leaders
- the creation of a business case for enhancing leave and pay, to gain executive sign off
- a survey of employees about to take maternity leave, and recent returnees, to gain insight into their experience and potential improvements.

As a result of their findings, Burberry implemented the following:

- a new global policy, starting on 1 April 2020, with a strong emphasis on facilitating a successful return to work. This included:
  - 18 weeks' paid leave **for all parents**
  - a four-week phased return to work, with a 20% reduction in hours on full pay
  - more inclusive language throughout the policy, such as *paternity leave* becoming *partner leave*.
- the creation of local policies and line manager guides, to help line managers better support their employees before, during and after a period of parental leave, including a 're-boarding' programme for those returning to work following leave.

## Outcomes

At the time of writing, the policy has only recently come into force, and so it is too early to give long-term results. However, initial feedback has been overwhelmingly positive:

*'This is massive. The time to have with your family is so important, and for men to only have two weeks in the UK has always bothered me. This shows how progressive Burberry is; it is such a positive change.'*

*'Amazing news. That is almost double the average here in the US. Great to work for a company that values family and puts action behind words.'*

*'Literally in tears. Little one due in May. This is beyond words, amazing.'*

Burberry will continue to monitor progress through attrition rates, employee surveys and recruitment activity, and will continue to review how this contributes to promoting diversity and an inclusive culture within their teams. This is an important step to continue their efforts to provide a flexible, family-friendly offer.

## Andrea Smith, Returner Champion (Burberry)

*'This has been a very worthwhile process, which has been well received by employees and externally. The support we had from the CIPD was excellent; our project lead was in frequent contact and we were well connected with a network of experienced, knowledgeable people who supported us at every step.'*

*'The resulting global policy is a huge cultural change; in countries where leave and pay is only offered to mothers, this kind of offer is a massive differentiator. Our work with the programme has really put Burberry ahead of the competition and supported our aspirations to be an employer of choice.'*

Supported by



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## Top tips

- Fostering inclusivity was a key driver for Burberry, and employees truly appreciated both the global consistency and the inclusion of all new parents – everyone in the Company knew they could benefit from the new policy if they became a parent.
- Recognise that the world is changing when it comes to childcare, and more and more employees now expect an equal approach to parental leave benefits.
- If you are a global company, be prepared for the work ahead to create a policy of this nature. However, it is certainly worth it to be able to foster a more inclusive culture for all employees.