

## Case study: CIPD Parent Returner Programme

### Skipton Building Society

#### Profile

**Size:** 2,400 employees nationally, located in Head Office and across 88 branches

**Location:** Head Office is based in Skipton, North Yorkshire.

**Sector:** Financial services.

**People function:** centralised People Team which includes People Development, People Operations and Business Partnering, Reward & Governance, People Experience, Colleague Communications team.

#### Key facts

Fourth largest Building Society

Skipton is the eighth best big company to work for 2020 (Sunday Times 25 Best Biggest Companies)

Best National Building Society 2020

Investors in people platinum

Joined the government's 'Disability Confident' scheme and set ourselves a target of becoming the most accessible building society by 2020.

Joined *Inclusive Employer and Mindful employer*

Signed up to Women in Finance Charter

#### Operational context

Skipton is a mutual building society, formed in 1853, set out to help people create a better future by providing a good place for people's savings and helping people own their own home. More than 160 years later, their purpose remains the same. They now have over one million customers.

Encouraging a diverse and inclusive culture is a really important part of Skipton's core values, and recognises the value colleagues' unique differences can bring.

In 2018 as part of the People Strategy a number of Diversity and Inclusion groups were set up to help embrace diversity right across the business. The company seeks to attract, develop and keep hold of talented people who, together, will build a stronger Society that is able to help customers today and in the future.

#### Problem

One of the D&I groups was a gender group which looked at, amongst others, addressing the issues that drive the gender pay and bonus gaps. A number of measures were put in place to start to address these.

In addition, a survey was conducted with colleagues returning from parental leave. This indicated that there were inconsistencies in experience whilst on family leave, and the time it took to transition back to work and get used to being a new parent.

#### What they did

A Parent Returner group was formed to tackle the issues and opportunities identified and discussed. Katherine Collins from the People Function led on this family-focused project, with a clear emphasis on the role of both parents and the support both mothers and fathers benefit from.

Based on the feedback from the survey and focus groups the following objectives were formed and delivered:

- a full review, rewrite and launch of the family policies in December 2019 with a new, attractive offering in pay for maternity, adoption and paternity leave. This is supported by clear practical guidance for colleagues and leaders
- the launch of a new Parent Network across the business in January 2019, providing support to many colleagues. The network now has 113 members and is on Microsoft Teams
- the introduction of a Parent Mentoring programme for mums and dads, one to one support and guidance with a parent mentor (again to include both mums and dads as mentors and mentees)
- a drive for greater and more flexible working options across the business. This includes the launch of job shares, flexibility in branch network roles and Skipton Direct contact centre launch. In addition, the company responded quickly to the COVID-19 pandemic with many colleagues working remotely and the offer of more flexible options for parents and carers over the summer months.

In September 2019 the company joined the CIPD Parent Returner Programme to build on the existing initiatives and on-going work to support their parent returners.

## Outcomes

In May 2020 the parent mentoring pilot was evaluated and the feedback was positive from both the 16 mentors and mentees that joined the pilot. Data shows that retention in Skipton Direct has gone from 69% returning after family leave, to 100%.

Work on advertising roles with flexibility and working more flexibly will continue for the coming period, with the importance of adopting greater flexibility during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the need to support parents.

The company will continue to review the following:

- individuals have a more consistent and positive experience whilst on family leave and returning
- leaders are more knowledgeable, confident and own the process to enable a better experience for all
- colleagues feel more confident and ready for work
- career conversations discussed with confidence
- flexible working is no longer a future barrier
- transition time back into work is reduced.

## The client's view

*'The CIPD Parent Returner Programme was an important part of developing our support for parents in the workplace. This remains a key focus for us, in both understanding individual needs and remaining open and flexible to the types of working arrangements that best suit a particular circumstance. The network has also been important as a space to share experiences which the Covid crisis has really brought into focus, and this will remain an important part of the discussion, sharing insights, experiences and good practice to inform and support all our colleagues.'*

**Jennifer Lloyd, Chair, Parent's Network**

Supported by



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## Top tips

- Everyone's experience of becoming a parent is different and therefore support should be tailored to the individual.
- Don't forget about the dads, they have a crucial role and also value support.
- Work closely with line managers to ensure they understand the family policies on a practical level but conversations are on a personal level.
- Set up a parent network/support for colleagues.
- Parent mentoring is invaluable to support an employee on their journey into parenthood and back to work transition.