



Top Employers for  
Working Families

**Benchmark  
Report**

**2018**



changing the way we live and work

# Top Employers for Working Families 2018

## Top 10 (in alphabetical order)

American Express  
Barclays Bank  
Crown Prosecution Service  
Deloitte  
Independent Living Fund Scotland  
Intellectual Property Office  
Lloyds Banking Group  
Pinsent Masons  
Royal Bank of Scotland  
Southdown Housing

## Top 11-30 (in alphabetical order)

Allen & Overy  
Citigroup  
Department for International Development  
DWF  
Experian  
Gowling WLG  
Hogan Lovells  
Imperial College  
Mayer Brown  
Ministry of Justice  
National Assembly for Wales  
Norton Rose Fulbright  
Oliver Wyman  
Public Health England  
Royal Bank of Canada  
Royal College of Nursing  
Simmons & Simmons  
UBS AG  
Unibail-Rodamco-Westfield  
Yorkshire Building Society  
UBS AG

## Introduction

Working Families' employer membership is made up of some of the UK's leading public, private and third sector organisations. Members are invited to take part in the Top Employers for Working Families Benchmark, providing an annual assessment of their flexible, agile and family friendly working policy and practice.

This year the Benchmark captures the experience of 630,000 employees across the organisations that took part. It is unique, capturing both the detail of policy and the culture in which it operates. Working Families' employer members use their individual results to take stock, benchmark against peers and competitors, create an evidence base of their achievements and identify improvements. For organisations that want to progress, it provides an invaluable platform to learn, assess and develop.

More broadly, the Benchmark reveals trends and best practice, building a picture over time of changes and developments in flexible, agile and family friendly working policy and practice. Key findings from the 2018 Benchmark are summarised in this report, providing insight into the policies organisations have developed, how they are used and supported, and the impact that flexible, agile and family friendly working has.



Media partner



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## Policy

The trend in work life policy provision has been towards inclusion: organisations have been diligent in positioning their policies around flexibility and work life balance as something for all employees, not just parents and carers.

Accompanying this is an increasing reliance on policy, rather than manager discretion, to make decisions around issues such as time off for dependent care, ensuring that employees are treated fairly and equally.

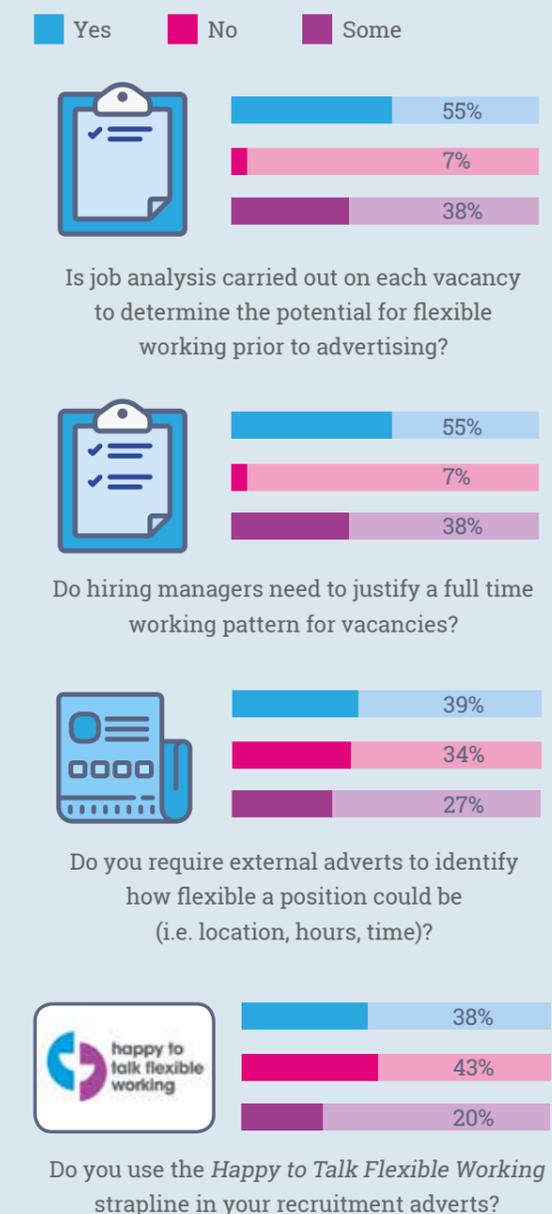
Organisations that took part in the Benchmark have, over the last five years, worked to ensure flexibility from the start for new employees. This is evident in two areas: extending the right to request flexible working beyond its statutory limits, and flexible recruitment.

Extending the right to request to all employees from day one has benefits in creating sustainable jobs and developing the idea that working flexibly is not an earned privilege but everyday business as usual. In a similar way, flexible recruitment foregrounds an organisations' commitment to offering jobs designed to offer a good work life fit from the outset. Flexible recruitment, often using the *Happy to Talk Flexible Working* strapline and logo, is becoming more commonplace. Most organisations are assessing roles for their flexible potential, and managers are increasingly required to justify the need for a job to be full time as the default. More than a third of organisations routinely state the opportunities for flexibility in their job adverts.

Figure 1:  
The right to request for all employees from day one



Figure 2:  
Recruitment activities



# Policy (continued)

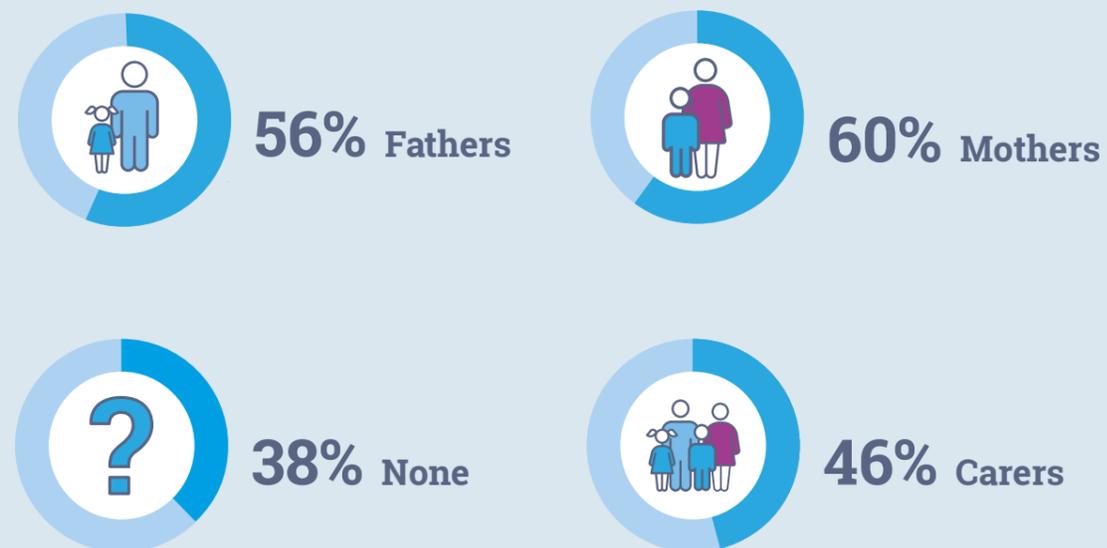
From flexible recruitment onwards, a life course approach to flexible and family friendly working is supported by most organisations. Eighty-eight per cent allow employees to pause and adjust the pace of their career development depending on their need. Acknowledging that employees will have peaks and troughs throughout their working lives when their need for flexibility and work life balance will fluctuate is pragmatic policy. Research shows that employees appreciate work life balance policies provided by their employer, even if the way they make use of them fluctuates over time: the underlying assumption being that they will require them at some point.<sup>1</sup>

However, there is still ground to make up here: only 39 per cent of employers have a discussion with new recruits at the end of their probationary period or at their first review with their manager that specifically covers work life balance opportunities. Although this might take place in other ways informally, a structured approach is both practical and useful in embedding the cultural message that flexibility is acceptable and normal.

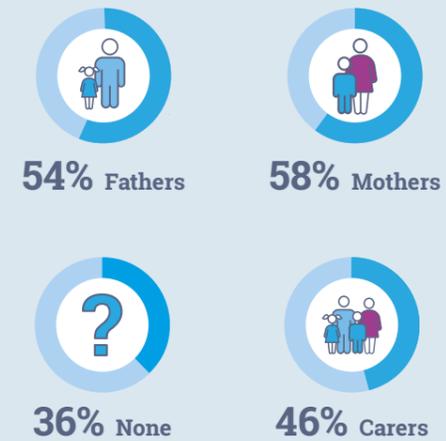
Policy support for flexibility is well embedded, with most forms available to at least some employees although access is limited by job type, especially those that are location dependent. Take up of flexible working remains gendered with far fewer male employees taking up reduced hours options like part time work, job share and term time working, instead preferring remote working and compressed working weeks.

However, this does not seem to be due to a large discrepancy in the family friendly policies and associated training and support that employers are making available to their male and female employees. Whilst there is clearly work to be done encouraging take up of reduced hours flexible working among male employees, in the training and support space it is to carers that attention should now be focussed.

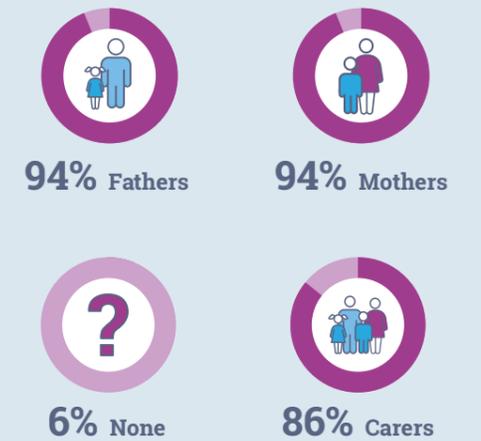
**Figure 3:**  
Formal internal mentoring/buddying for employees



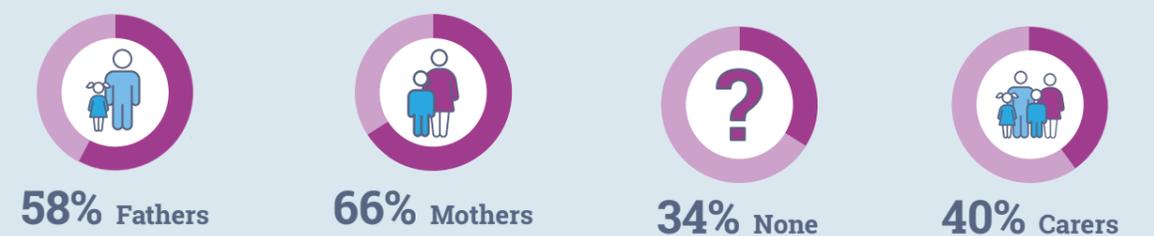
**Figure 4:**  
Workshops for employees



**Figure 5:**  
Employee guide book / web pages



**Figure 6:**  
Coaching for employees



<sup>1</sup> Christopher Galea, Inge Houkes & Angelique De Rijk (2014) An insider's point of view: how a system of flexible working hours helps employees to strike a proper balance between work and personal life, *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 25:8, 1090-1111

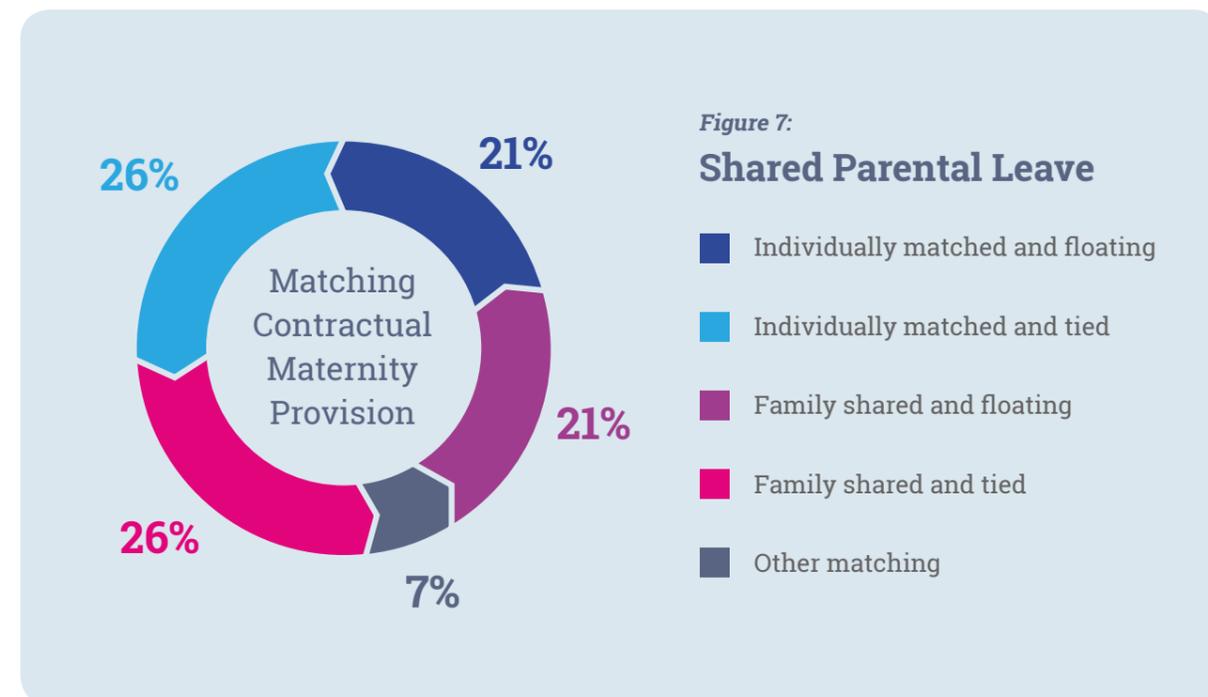
# Maternity, paternity and shared parental leave

Most organisations that took part in the Benchmark (93 per cent) go beyond statutory maternity pay. Most commonly, 34 per cent of organisations provide 26 weeks of fully paid maternity leave.

Paternity pay is paid at full pay by three quarters of organisations. Fifteen per cent offer more than two weeks at full pay. Twenty-seven per cent of organisations have also made paternity leave a day one right, waiving the qualifying period. Just under half of organisations (47 per cent) allow paternity leave to be taken flexibly, through either taking it later than 56 days after birth or adoption or allowing it to be split into separate periods. In comparison to statutory maternity provisions paternity leave is short: some employers are recognising this and enhancing beyond the statutory framework to give fathers a better deal.

Shared Parental Leave (SPL) is, in 77 per cent of organisations, being matched to contractual maternity provision. The way that it is matched is shown below.

Eighty-two percent of organisations have seen fathers taking up SPL in their workplace. For almost one fifth (18 per cent) take up has been higher than anticipated, with a further half reporting that take up has been as they expected. Those organisations that have seen the highest level of take up are those that match maternity (or enhance as an 'individual' entitlement), but that also have demonstrated, through activities like the Working Families' Best Practice Awards, significant effort into communicating and supporting SPL as an option for their fathers.

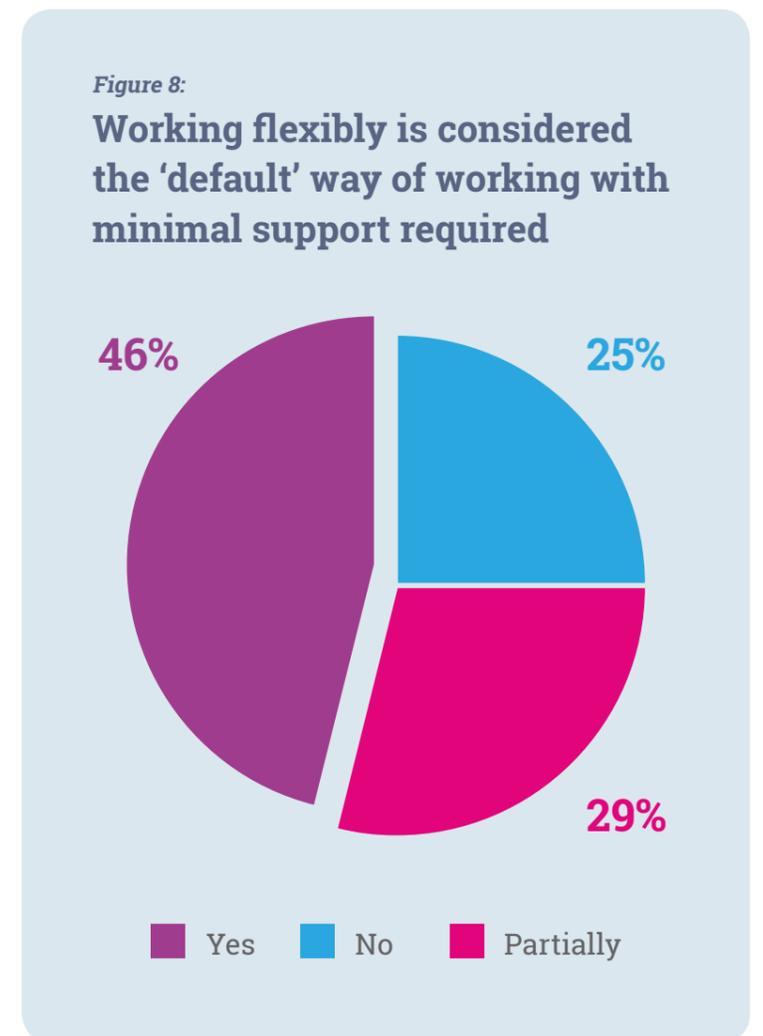


# Embedding policy

The Benchmark examines the use of flexible, agile and family friendly working practice to help participants understand how they support and develop their workplace culture.

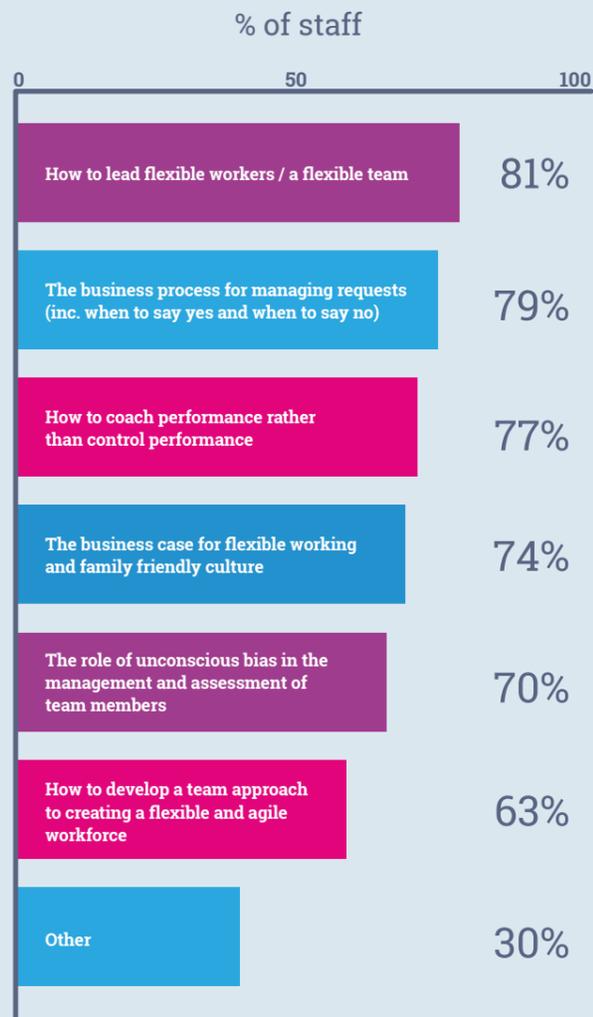
Most organisations assessed their integration of their policy as good over a range of metrics: for example, most state their family friendly working values explicitly and can demonstrate senior buy-in and leadership support. However, leadership needs to be authentic and matched by actions. Working Families members will be familiar with the idea of 'real' models: role models who are relatable, credible and who demonstrate their belief in and commitment to flexible and family friendly working through their actions. Notably, a fifth of organisations felt that their leaders presented a barrier to flexible and family friendly working.

Most said that flexible working, and flexible employees, are seen positively. However, flexibility is not the default way of working yet. Although it has moved in from the margins to the mainstream, the required structures and attitudes that will support it to become the default way of working are not yet there. For example, long hours are still seen as sign of commitment in over a third of organisations, and work life balance is still seen as an issue to be 'worked around'.



## Embedding policy (continued)

Figure 9:  
What are managers trained in?



The culture within an organisation determines use of flexible and family friendly working; the way that policies are communicated and administered – and the way people are managed - makes a real difference. Amongst organisations that took part in the Benchmark, communication to and information for employees about flexible and family friendly working is widespread. Less used are interactive sessions promoting flexible working and work life balance. The most popular form of interactive promotion was seminars, used by 71 per cent of organisations, more than half of whom ran them on a quarterly basis.

Transparency-wise, 91 per cent of organisations that took part in the Benchmark publish their method and criteria for assessing requests; and the same proportion publish these criteria alongside their flexible working policy.

However, there are some gaps in practice. Although organisations are generally consistent in how and who they use as approvers for flexible working requests, over half have only trained half or fewer of their approvers in assessing the business case for flexibility. There is a similar gap for the line managers who manage flexible workers: more than half of organisations have only trained a quarter or less of the managers. Twenty-three per cent have provided no training at all. Effective management of flexibility is crucial to maximise the individual and organisational benefits and with expectations of flexible working firmly established, managers need the tools to help them manage the many different forms flexible working arrangements can take.

## Take up and impact

Understanding the use of family friendly, flexible working, and the impact it has on the organisation is essential.

This can be complex, as flexibility will have been implemented over time, often with varying reasons and not always developed as part of an overall strategy. Similarly, the outcomes can be difficult to quantify, as organisations trying to apply an off the shelf business case, have found. Nonetheless, understanding flexibility, both formal (usually contractual) and informal, is important for both creating a solid evidence base from which to build further and, ultimately, developing a supportive work life balance culture in the workplace.

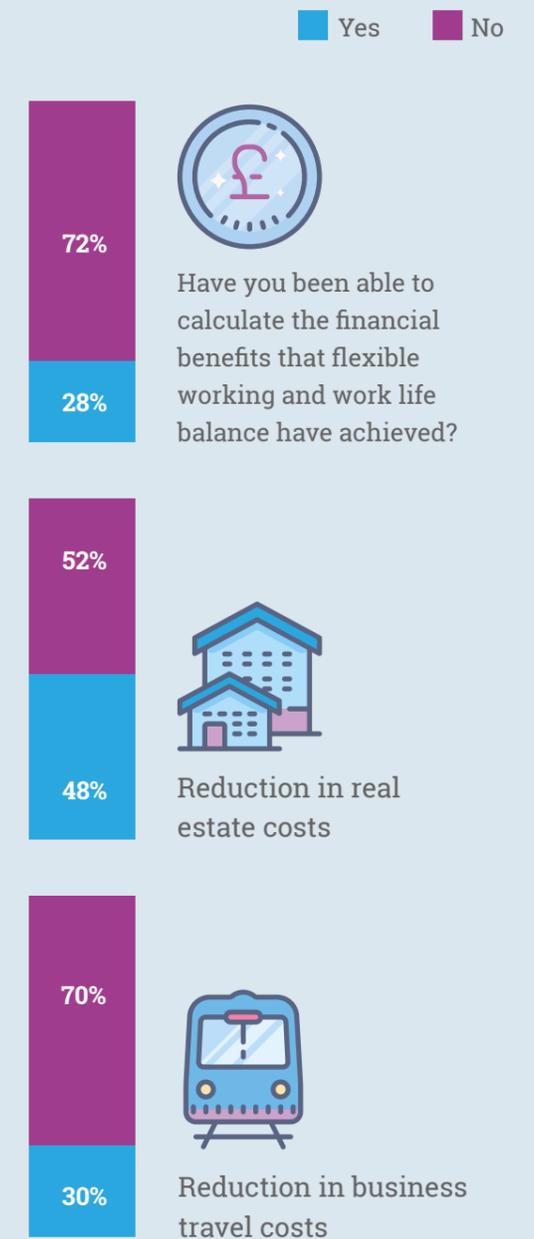
Organisations are improving in terms of measuring flexibility, with more being able to report on the numbers of employees working in flexible ways, and the gender breakdown. This gives them insight into their workplace culture. It demonstrates clearly that fewer men are working in reduced hours ways, for example. For organisations thinking about gender pay, talent pipelines and equality and diversity this is a metric that can be measured over time to detect the effect of policy initiatives designed to tackle these issues.

Where flexibility is measured, the effects are positive. For example, the number of top performance ratings for part time and reduced hours workers were higher than the average for full time workers.

Figure 10:  
Top performance ratings



Figure 11:  
The effects of flexible and family friendly working



“This year gender pay reporting has emphasised the importance of the ability to provide accurate workforce information”.

Please get in touch to find out how we can support you.

## Summary

The 2018 Benchmark shows that flexible and family friendly working is continuing to evolve. Policy in many organisations is well developed, and the focus now is integrating and embedding those policies.

There is evidence that an increased focus on line managers over the last few years has paid off (they are seen as less of a barrier to flexibility in terms of knowledge and skills), with a drop of nine per cent in organisations who identify line manager skill as a barrier to flexible and family friendly working. Although there is still work to do here, with more managers needing to be trained - equipping them with the right skills and support (such as peer to peer clinics, buddying and mentoring) is crucial to creating a flexible working culture and maximising the benefit for both employer and employee.

Employers are also taking measurement seriously, with more comprehensive individual measurements available this year than in previous ones. A realistic perspective on measurement is perhaps one that recognises that,

although it won't provide all the answers, it allows you to develop a strategic position on flexibility. This year gender pay reporting has emphasised the importance of the ability to provide accurate workforce information; data about the use of flexibility within your workforce offers opportunities not just to diagnose and report, but to offer prescriptions and routes to improvement too. There is a role for HR analytics to influence behaviour and culture and impact organisational performance, but to achieve this requires a reliable foundation of knowledge that illuminates the extent and influence of how people are working, and the effects that this is having.

## A note on the Benchmark

This report summarises the main points of the 2018 Top Employers for Working Families member Benchmark. Working Families' members receive detailed feedback and guidance on their entry. Benchmarking provides a unique opportunity to both measure progress and to understand what best practice looks like.

This Benchmark was originally devised in partnership with the Institute for Employment Studies.

**Working Families would like to thank all those organisations who participated in this year's Benchmark.**

## Support for employers

Working Families is the UK's work life balance organisation. We've spent the last forty years helping organisations develop an agile, flexible and family friendly approach to work that maximises engagement, wellbeing and on-going high performance – the key to business success.

Our business support team works with our members to develop tailor-made solutions for flexible working and better work life balance. We help employers develop an inclusive, high-performing workforce, fit for the future.

We've developed the *Happy to Talk Flexible Working* strapline and logo for employers to show the flexibility on offer in their vacancies, opening up the application process to more people with the right skills and talents. Crucially, the strapline encourages managers to think through the best way to get the job done.

*“We are delighted to be a longstanding member of Working Families. We are committed to ensuring that we provide a working environment where our people can combine a great career with family life. Always an excellent source of research and thinking in this area, Working Families inform our efforts and challenges us to take the next steps.”*

– Allen & Overy

*“Working Families is always on hand to offer us expert support and advice when we need it – particularly in areas of new policy and practice. The membership fee is good value when you consider the range and quality of resources at your disposal, and the benefits of being aligned with one of the UK's leading work-life balance organisations.”*

– Addleshaw Goddard

*“Membership of Working Families has proven to be one of the best diversity budget spends to date. Not only do they provide a wealth of experience and solid evidence based support for our internal diversity programmes of work, Working Families also provides our employees with expert advice on all aspects of being a working parent and carer.”*

– E-on UK

**Please contact one of our business support team members to learn how we can help your organisation:**

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