



Fathers in the Workplace Toolkit

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The Equal Parenting Project at the University of Birmingham undertakes research focused on breaking down barriers to encourage more fathers to care in the first year after birth or adoption. This small change can help: families to spend more time together, fathers to bond more with their children early on and support gender equality. One important way to drive this change is to help organisations effectively support fathers in their workplaces. To do this the Equal Parenting Project have created an evidence based 'Fathers in the Workplace Toolkit', a practical guide for organisations to better support fathers across their organisations.

- The 'Fathers in the Workplace Toolkit' is a practical evidenced based toolkit underpinned by academic research undertaken by the Equal Parenting Project.
- The toolkit consists of five modules including: A Parenting Passport, Setting up a Parenting Group, Inclusive Communications, Inclusive Policies and Supporting Return to Work. It is a living toolkit and will be updated as the research develops and new needs are identified.
- The toolkit builds upon extant data which shows that fathers increasingly want to spend more time caring in the first year (Curtice et al., 2019; EHRC, 2016).
- The toolkit aims to break down barriers in order to encourage more fathers to take on childcare to improve outcomes for families and children and drive gender equality.
- The toolkit aims to improve access to information and support for fathers and parents, it offers examples of fathers successfully caring in order to normalise fathers taking leave. The toolkit also outlines the business benefits of such an approach.
- The toolkit has a section for large organisations and a separate section for SME's, recognising that different types of organisations face different challenges in this area and have different levels of available resources.

The 'Fathers in the Workplace Toolkit' is made up of five key modules with different approaches developed for large organisations and SMEs respectively due to the differences in available resources. These are:

- Communication
- Parenting Passports
- Parenting Groups
- Policies
- Returning to Work

Each module includes key information to help employers support fathers (and all parents) to navigate the challenges of combining parenthood and work-life. There are also hints and tips as well as links to further resources, making it possible for workplaces to 'pick and choose' amongst modules according to their specific organisational needs. Below is an overview of what to expect in each module.

Communications

This module of the toolkit is designed to support organisations to effectively communicate leave policies and organisational support to fathers.

Research from the University of Birmingham has shown that effective communication is key to encouraging fathers to use parental leave and caring policies.

"Supporting fathers at work is important and this toolkit helps businesses do that. It gives excellent advice and practical guidance that is relevant to all types of organisations."

Anthony Fitzpatrick, Employee Relations and Global Employment Policy Lead, Aviva

Whilst parents are aware of policies like Maternity and Paternity leave, few are aware of policies which can help both parents to share leave such as Shared Parental Leave, and there is very little understanding of how such policies can be used (Birkett & Forbes, 2019).

"Champions" can also be used to communicate with parents. For larger organisations these can be fathers who have used the policies and are passionate about the opportunities. Smaller organisations can use external examples like the ones provided in this toolkit to help inspire fathers.



The toolkit contains a variety of resources around communications, which can be adapted according to your particular business needs and the needs of your employees. These include:

- How to design materials and processes to effectively communicate parenting policies.
- Tips for communication strategies.
- How to develop visible 'champions' within the organisation or draw on external champions to inspire employees.
- Sample posters and other customisable materials.

"Supporting fathers in the workplace has a wide range of benefits for everyone. This toolkit is practical and easy to use, it's the one stop and definitive guide for any organisation who wants to better support working dads."

Elliott Rae, Founder, Music Football Fatherhood

Parenting Passport

Parents, and particularly fathers, may feel uncomfortable re-explaining family circumstances and support requirements to each new manager when they move through an organisation or return from a period of leave. This can be avoided by using a Parenting Passport encouraging an open dialogue between the manager and employee.

A Parenting Passport is a 'living' document, which records information about a parent's caring responsibilities and support needs and can encourage understanding between the parent employee and their organisation regarding their particular requirements over time.

A Parenting Passport template is included in this toolkit and can be adapted further to particular organisational needs. The sort of information included would usually feature: baby's due date, deadlines for applying for leave, employee and employer expectations and support required.

If it is appropriate, the Passport can be on the company intranet, alongside different leave application forms and used with other elements of this toolkit, such as Parenting Groups and Fatherhood Champions.

The following resources are available in the toolkit to support Parenting Passports:

- An example Parenting Passport template which can be adapted for your organisation.
- Tips on designing and implementing a simple Parenting Passport for the organisation.
- Tips on managing and maintaining the Parenting Passport as a 'living' document.

"It really is an excellent piece of work, in particular because it is comprehensive, accessible and very practical."

Rosie Ginday MBE, Miss Macaroon

Parenting Groups

This module recognises that the workplace can provide opportunities for parents to discuss and share information, particularly fathers, who may not traditionally have had this opportunity.

Different sized businesses have different options here. A large business might be able to facilitate an onsite or online Parenting Group to support employees and communicate and explain parenting policies. Smaller businesses can look at externally facilitated groups which they might encourage staff to join along with supplying a list of other externally provided resources that new parents might be interested in.

The following resources are available in the toolkit to support Parenting Groups:

- Practical tips and advice for setting up a Parenting Group or supporting employees to join externally facilitated groups.
- Templates for posters, technical advice and terms of reference documents.
- A guide to external resources available.

Policies

Fathers may be reluctant to ask about flexible working and family leave, especially longer periods of leave such as Shared Parental Leave. This module aims to help businesses review and develop policies with a view to ensuring they are inclusive, visible and accessible.

Policies should cover: statutory entitlements, eligibility criteria and outline exactly what benefits are available and processes followed by the employee and employer. Employers should clearly outline leave and pay options available to parents and how to apply for them. Providing line managers and HR with appropriate training so that they are aware of the policies is also important.

Reviewing policies regularly ensures compliance and fit with your business values. A well written Paternity Leave, Unpaid Parental Leave or SPL policy demonstrates that organisations are serious about supporting leave for mothers and fathers.

Transparency of policies can also encourage employee retention as well as attract prospective employees, particularly Millennials.

"We welcome the Fathers in the Workplace toolkit, especially as it brings together information from many sources into the one go-to site and also that it is founded on rigorous academic research, and look forward to seeing how it continues to develop."

Rob Edwards, Head of Business Development and Marketing, The Institute of Small Business and Entrepreneurship

The following resources are available in the toolkit to support policies:

- Tips for writing accessible policies.
- Information on statutory requirements for policies.
- Links to additional online resources to support policy development.

Return to Work

This module provides specific guidance on how to help you support fathers to reintegrate back into the workplace after a longer period of parental leave.

A meeting prior to the employee taking leave could involve a discussion focusing on issues such as how pay and bonuses will be treated during leave. As with mothers taking Maternity or Adoption Leave, it is important to ensure fathers are assured of their entitlements and feel supported.

Prior to their return, preparations can be made to ensure a smooth transition back to work. Practical measures such as ensuring the employee has the required equipment, knows where their desk is and is informed of any personnel changes can really help with the transition back to work as well as an understanding that there may be some teething problems as new childcaring arrangements are established.

A personal welcome back from the father's manager would also be good practice. This would also provide an opportunity to introduce any new team members and help to give the father an idea of any other changes that have taken place while they have been away.

If the returner has taken SPL they may be an appropriate candidate to become a "Fatherhood Champion" whereby they agree to help promote the policy within the business.

The following resources are available in the toolkit to support the Return to Work process:

- Tips on how to manage the Return to Work Transition.
- A checklist for suggested actions for managers.
- A resource list for new parents giving them contact details for local and national resources such as nurseries, schools, libraries etc.

References

Birkett, H., & Forbes, S. (2019). Where's dad? Exploring the low take-up of inclusive parenting policies in the UK. *Policy Studies*, 40(2), 205-224.

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You can link to the toolkit at:

<https://more.bham.ac.uk/fathersintheworkplace/>

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