

Supporting New Dads in the Workplace

WRITER
HELEN
LETCHFIELD

‘If dads are recognised and supported in the workplace, mums can reap the rewards at home, and at work’, says Helen Letchfield, Co-Founder of Parenting for Professionals.

Employees who have just become fathers need recognition and support for the change they are going through. Although they don't have to make the same life-changing decisions that a woman suspending a career to take maternity leave has to, they are still facing one of the biggest changes and increases in responsibility they will ever experience.

Traditionally, we have only seen support for women during maternity, predominantly at home, but more recently at work. But if we only offer ‘training’ to women to become the work and childcare experts, then doesn't that assume we are expecting them to do both jobs of working and caring for the family, and therefore excluding fathers? This is not a good message if we are aiming to create more diverse, family-friendly workplaces, where we have a healthy mix of men and women, working and parenting.

Consider this: the father of your children understands what you go through as a working mother – during maternity leave and then when returning to work; he knows how to help you and makes plans at work to manage his time and stress levels; understands his priorities and still manages to continue to succeed at work. Sounds too good to be true, right?

Actually, it's not. Some companies, especially those who are striving to become more family-friendly to attract talented and diverse staff, put on workshops to support their new and expectant fathers at work. Small groups of new fathers and fathers-to-be meet to discuss issues

such as what they can do to support the family; what their childcare options are; and how their new role of ‘working father’ can be managed effectively so a good work/life balance can eventually be forged.



What can dads learn?

- That their life is changing as they enter fatherhood; not just their partner's life. Being a father can and will impact their working lives, so changes do need to be made.
- That society has changed. More mothers have to work now to help keep the family

financially afloat, so dads need to help out with the parenting.

- What they can do to help and support the family – whether it be planning the family finances, ensuring parental entitlements are understood and maximised or doing the nursery or school run.
- That they are now legally allowed to take Additional Paternity Leave (APL). When the mother has returned to work, after 20 weeks, the father can stay at home to take over the childcare for up to 26 weeks.
- That it's okay to talk about your family openly at work and take time out to be more involved at home. In fact, the more open fathers are, the easier it is for mothers to be more open about how they are managing their work/family balance.

What are the benefits for working mums?

- They are no longer expected to manage 100 per cent of the childcare.
- They get recognition and help from both their companies and their ‘other halves’.
- Losing the burden of some of the childcare responsibilities releases time and energy for work and outside interests.

Consequently, companies benefit. They establish a more diverse workforce and gain the all-important recognition for promoting a flexible working environment. Supporting dads is going to become the next ‘big thing’. Companies are striving for ways to retain their talent in the midst of a lack of material reward, and time and flexibility is the new currency.

about the author



Helen Letchfield is Co-Founder and Principal Facilitator for Parenting for Professionals. As a qualified performance coach, Helen works with parents and parents-to-be to offer support through the challenge of creating a home/work balance. She has 12 years experience in coaching and developing corporate clients, and has worked for Barclays Wealth, Credit Suisse, Canon and Harrods. She is a working mum to two boys aged six and three. Parenting for Professionals supports parents at work through its in-depth Maternity Coaching Programme, as well as one-to-one coaching: www.parentingforprofessionals.co.uk

