



Commission on a Gender-Equal Economy:

Examples of transformative policies and practices from Business in The Community

Flexible Working

Flexible working is an agreed way of working which meets the individual needs of the employee. Timewise define flexible working as 'any kind of job that offers flexibility in where, when or in how much time the work is done.'¹ This refers to **quality, permanent** roles, not precarious employment.²

If managed responsibly, flexible working can improve work-life balance and spark a greater sense of responsibility, ownership and control over one's working life. Flexible workers can better manage their responsibilities outside of work, such as caring for elderly parents, which enables many to keep working for longer, and in a smarter way. This disproportionately impacts women. As stated in Business in the Community's Equal Lives research, in partnership with Santander UK, women are eight times more likely to take the primary role in caring for children and are one and a half times more likely to take the lead in caring for adults.³

All employees have a legal right to request flexible working after they have worked with the employer for at least 26 weeks. Should the request be rejected, a business case for rejection must be provided.

Recommendations to be transformative:

- Organisations should offer flexible working from day one so that all employees have the ability to request flexible working from the start of the job. The government should make this statutory.
- Organisations should implement flexible working into all job roles, at all levels, unless there is a clear reason why a job cannot be done flexibly. Ensure this is regulated across the organisation.
- Provide the widest possible range of flexible working options, in order to ensure that there are appropriate options for all employees.

¹ Timewise (2019) What is flexible working? Available here: <https://timewise.co.uk/insights/what-is-flexible-working/>

² Ibid.

³ Business in the Community (2018) Equal Lives. Available here: <https://gender.bitc.org.uk/all-resources/research-articles/equal-lives-partnership-santander>





Impact Story: Deloitte

Deloitte's Time Out scheme enables employees to take a four-week block of unpaid leave in addition to their holiday entitlement to achieve a better balance between their career and personal commitments. Time Out can be taken every year, at a time which suits both the individual and the business. Although it is unpaid, benefit allowances are ongoing during these periods of leave. Introduced in 2014, Time Out has proved popular across the organisation – with over 700 employees so far benefiting from the initiative. For more information, please click here:

<https://www.bitc.org.uk/resources-training/resources/impact-stories/equal-lives-deloitte-time-out-scheme-which-enables-all>

Impact Story: Capgemini

Capgemini UK's Active Inclusion programme introduced a new approach to flexible working, overcoming the challenges associated with flexible working in client-facing roles. Emphasising the need to challenge the workforce and its clients rather than just introducing internal flexible working policies, Capgemini UK's delivery director wrote a guide to enable client managers to have similar dialogues based on providing their clients with the best talent. Examples of senior leaders' flexible working arrangements have been shared internally as part of wider internal communications showcasing what works. Overall, there has been a 16% increase in people offered flexible working, which has also translated into clients promoting flexible working in their own organisations too.

Impact Story: Aviva

At Aviva, two male employees have a shared role as Group Director of Sustainability & Public Policy; both deciding they wanted to spend more time with their children. Their manager was open to trialling the idea for an initial period of six months. It proved a success and was made permanent. Will and Sam each work three days a week and abide by their self-designed thirteen principles of their job share. They believe the ability to interpret flexible working in this way is an important way for organisations to hold on to talent. Their job share enables them to spend quality time with their children while young, whilst also maintaining a successful career.

Parental Leave

Shared Parental Leave is designed to help equalise care between parents immediately after the birth of a child, reduce the impact of leave on women in heterosexual couples, and influence routines of care later on. It is a legal entitlement for eligible parents of babies born, or children placed for adoption, on or after 5 April 2015. It provides both parents with the opportunity to consider the best arrangement to care for their child during the child's first year.

Research from Scandinavia demonstrates that Shared Parental Leave and subsidised childcare can contribute to decreasing the gender pay gap. National parental leave policies in Sweden and



Norway are considered highly effective - with high wage replacement when an employee is on leave, flexible leave arrangements and designated leave for fathers. A Swedish study revealed that a mother's future earnings increased on average 7% for every month the father takes leave.⁴

Recommendations to be transformative:

- Organisations should publish their parental leave and pay policies on their website.
- Organisations should enhance maternity leave, paternity leave and Shared Parental Leave.
- Organisations should make sure Shared Parental Leave can be taken at any point and simultaneously within the first year so men and women are equally able to remain visible across the organisation during time off
- The government should Introduce a quota system for Shared Parental Leave similar to the Swedish model where a portion of leave time is allocated to partners, which will result in a loss of paid leave if they don't use it.

Impact Story: Accenture

Accenture's Shared Parental Leave policy offers equalised 32-week fully paid parental leave to all employees - equal to its maternity provision. Accenture have shared stories of its positive experiences to promote the policy, as well as providing added support for both parents and line managers. Through this policy, Accenture aim to encourage men to play a more active role in childcare at home and to engage their male workforce in the opportunities and challenges of taking a primary child caring role, at the same time allowing a greater level of support for working mothers.

⁴ IFAU (2010) The effect of own and spousal parental leave earnings.