

Citi and LSE: supporting working fathers

Citi and the London School of Economics have both recognised the benefits of offering support for expectant and new fathers at the workplace. **Beatrice Harper** looks at the organisations' fathers' programmes and some wider aspects of their policies that support parents.

Some organisations have recognised the importance of supporting new and expectant fathers, as well as providing maternity rights for mothers. We look at two organisations that have provided workshops, and other support, for new fathers, as well as offering enhanced paternity rights.

CITI

More than three-quarters of Citi's (box 1) UK employees are men and, in 2009, the organisation launched a fathers' programme. Revolving around "New Dads workshops", the Fathers' Programme brings together new fathers and fathers-to-be and helps them think about how to create the right work-life balance at an organisation as demanding as Citi.

Xanic Jones, EMEA diversity and inclusion specialist at Citi, explains: "We recognised that employees who were becoming fathers were going through a transitional time of life. It was apparent that men were facing new challenges but not being supported in the same way that women are."

New Dads workshops

Citi designed the New Dads' workshops in partnership with Talking Talent, the

organisation that provides Citi's Managing Parental Leave programme. Workshops take place every quarter, and last for two hours, run over the lunchtime period at Citi's head office in Canary Wharf.

Jones explains: "The sessions look at managing key relationships at work and with family members, and give new and expectant dads the opportunity to think about the emotional aspects of fatherhood. It takes time to recognise all the new challenges faced by dads, who often don't have the networks to share these experiences."

Other topics covered include practical advice on paternity leave, pay, flexible working, childcare and family healthcare, as well as the changing role of the father.

The workshops are entirely male, including the facilitators. Unless they are themselves new or expectant fathers, members of the HR/diversity department do not attend. "Citi recognised the benefit of creating an all-male environment, allowing men to feel more comfortable opening up and sharing experiences," says Jones.

The groups of fathers attending New Dads workshops are generally kept small, creating an intimate setting, which provides an opportunity for the men to think about becoming a new father, the impact of fatherhood on them and their careers, their partners and their families, in the company of other men.

Additional paternity leave

Citi has ensured that its policies for fathers are aligned with those offered to mothers and it was among the first UK organisations to announce matching additional paternity leave (APL) pay with maternity leave pay when APL was introduced in 2011, as well as paying full pay during the two weeks' ordinary paternity leave. Citi's maternity policy

KEY POINTS

- "Dads workshops" supporting expectant and new fathers are the key to both Citi's and LSE's fathers' programmes.

- The organisations provide management training that alerts managers to new fathers' needs.

- Both organisations support flexible working arrangements for all parents, seeking to break the mould that mothers are often treated more sympathetically in this respect.

- LSE has also set up a network of mentors to support expectant and new fathers.

BOX 1: CITI

Citi is a global bank, providing consumers, corporations, governments and institutions with a broad range of financial products and services, including consumer banking and credit, corporate and investment banking, securities brokerage, transaction services, and wealth management.

It has approximately 200 million customer accounts, and does business in more than 160 countries and jurisdictions.

Citi has 8,000 UK employees, of whom 6,500 are men.

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includes six months at full pay, and this benefit is transferred to fathers who take the opportunity of using the balance of maternity leave, which they are entitled to do from 20 weeks – giving them up to six weeks' paternity leave on full pay.

The take-up of APL has, so far, been low but, as Jones explains, the legislation is relatively new. She says: "I think fathers in general are only just getting used to the entitlement, let alone the societal stigma, and so I don't think that many employers have seen a large take-up of APL as yet. I do believe, however, that this is only a matter of time and that all employers will see more men taking up APL in the future. This is the reason why Citi has been very forward-thinking in matching our APL pay policy to our enhanced maternity pay policy."

With the introduction of APL, it is acknowledged that managers need to understand that male as well as female employees may be absent from the workplace for longer periods of time, and this is now covered in management training.

It is also apparent at Citi that fathers have recognised the importance of being able to work flexibly, for example through use of remote working.

Business case

Citi was recognised as one of the UK's 10 Top Employers in the 2012 Working Families awards, being joint winner (with LSE, below) of the Best for Fathers award.

Jones's key message is that it is crucial to recognise fathers' roles as parents and to be aware of the challenges men face. "Don't ignore them, new fathers need just as much help and assistance as mothers and they don't have the ready-made connections that many women will have formed during pregnancy. New fathers have a different journey."

Jones does not envisage any significant changes in the way Citi delivers its fathers' programme for the moment, as most staff are based in close proximity to Canary Wharf. This means that Citi can use its facilities to host the workshops. However, as the numbers of staff working flexible hours increases, Jones says that they may well explore using other means to deliver the workshops, such as hosting virtual events.

THE LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND POLITICAL SCIENCE (LSE)

The impetus for LSE's (box 2) paternity programme – "Balancing work and being dad" – came from the benchmarking exercise the university undertook as part of its submission for the 2011 Working Families awards. Gail Keeley, HR manager, policy and employment relations, explains: "The benchmarking survey identified a gap in relation to our fathers' policies. We knew we had an excellent retention figure for mothers and we had good policies in place but we felt that fathers were slipping below the radar."

The new programme was launched with a pilot workshop in October 2011. Following its success, LSE held a second workshop during that academic year and have now decided to hold one a term (three in each academic year).

"Balancing work and being dad" comprises two main elements: a workshop for new and expectant fathers and a support network of mentors.

It was also recognised that managers needed to be aware of the role of fathers, and LSE has offered training to managers that gives practical advice on how to create a culture where flexible working is unexceptional, thereby providing support for all parents.

Workshops

LSE devised the "Balancing work and being dad" programme in partnership with Working Families, who provide the course trainer and customised documentation. Its stated objective is "to provide practical tools and insightful information on how to achieve a balance between being a father and managing work".

Topics covered include: 21st century expectations of fatherhood; the potential for conflict between fatherhood and career; working hours and related anxiety; the pros and cons of working at home; and working flexibly. A booklet is provided with the course containing the presentation slides as well as information about LSE's policies and procedures and guidance on requesting flexible working. It also includes the Working Families fact-sheet that provides a short guide to basic information on benefits, rights at work and flexible working.

In order to maximise the benefits to staff, LSE decided to open up the workshops to

BOX 2: THE LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND POLITICAL SCIENCE (LSE)

LSE is a well-known British university employing nearly 3,000 people, comprising 1,630 full-time and 1,350 part-time employees. Just over half (51%) are men and just under half (45%) come from countries outside the UK. The 9,300 students represent 145 nationalities.

employees' partners as well as employees. The first course had 12 participants, including three non-employees. Eight participants, including two non-employees, attended the second workshop.

Prospective attendees were alerted to the programme on the HR website, through the staff newsletter and via direct approaches by HR.

Workshops last for 90 minutes and take place over lunchtime, in comfortable surroundings to create an intimate atmosphere.

Mentors

Feedback from the pilot workshop indicated that employee mentors would be a positive addition to the programme.

Mentors were recruited, initially from among the 12 parents who attended the first workshop. There are now both men and women who act as mentors. They come from a variety of backgrounds and represent staff at various grades. At the moment, there are more academic support staff than academics; the academics include a representative of top management and a lecturer who specialises in organisational behaviour. Academic support staff include managers across the school who recently became parents.

Mentors attend a one-day training course that is delivered by Working Families.

The mentors have their own website, which describes the mentor's role as that of "an informed friend who provides guidance and support in confidence to parents-to-be and parents". They also offer the benefit of their own experience of managing work and home.

Before going on paternity leave, fathers are offered a mentor. The mentor and the mentee agree between themselves how and when they meet.

LSE plans to train a further 12 mentors and staff were invited to volunteer. It already

has a waiting list of people who wish to be trained as mentors.

Manager up-skilling and flexible working

Keeley explains how important it is to up-skill managers to appreciate the importance of supporting parents and to acknowledge the benefits of flexible working. "We held three short webinars, each of around half an hour. These cover the business case for supporting parents, work-life balance and on creating a team approach by flexible working to achieve high performance." The webinars are freely available on the intranet and each webinar has a supporting workbook that can be downloaded.

Future plans***Parents' network***

"Balancing work and being dad" is still at a relatively early stage of its development and Keeley said there are many ideas for expanding it. One possibility would be setting up a parents network, an idea that is supported by the mentors. At the moment there is no formal network, although the workshops provide the opportunity for informal networks.

Mentors – developing the programme

The mentor scheme is also still in its formative stages. The mentors' feedback on the first year's experience will continue to influence the future shape and direction. For example, the feedback from a recent meeting of the mentors has led to the conclusion that guidance on the mentoring relationship on the website would be better than a formal contract between the mentor and mentee, there should be regular items on the LSE's website, action learning sets will be useful, and mentees should be asked to give their feedback on the effectiveness of the mentoring they received on an anonymous basis (only the mentor and mentee know about their mentoring relationship).

Mums' workshops

The "Dads' workshops" have proved so successful that mothers have requested a workshop programme too. As a result, the first "Balancing work and being mum" workshop will be held in November 2012. ■