

Working Families

Shared Parental Leave

Briefing for Employers

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Shared Parental Leave.

Introduction

Shared Parental Leave (SPL) is a new entitlement coming into force from 1 December 2014 for eligible parents of children due to be born or adopted on or after 5 April 2015. Not to be confused with Parental Leave (that allows for up to 18 weeks of time off work before a child's 5th birthday), SPL is intended to allow parents greater flexibility and choice in how they care for their new child in its first year. The introduction of SPL offers a unique opportunity for employers to take positive action in relation to increasingly important workforce issues: fathers in the workplace, gender equality, choice and control in working life, and engagement. These are interrelated, and through supporting parents to enable them to make real choices about the patterns of caring within the first year of their new baby's life, it is likely that different patterns of work and different expectations and habits around caring will emerge and take hold. This will benefit organisations as well as employees. Until men take on a greater parenting role, the progress of women in the workplace will be inhibited. Research also indicates that younger fathers are more disengaged in the workplace, and that the workplace barriers they face in being able to participate in family life as they wish are driving dissatisfaction and lowering engagement¹. Ensuring father engagement should be high on the agenda for all organisations seeking to develop sustainable working practices.

Well-supported SPL is one tool with which employers can focus on their working fathers and, at the same time, encourage the development of a culture that enhances opportunities for mothers to progress their own careers. Social and economic trends mean that the demand for better access for both parents to provide care is going to increase and organisations that get this right from the start will have an advantage.

Administering SPL

Overview

SPL is a new right for parents which allows them to share leave with a partner and/or split up periods of leave.

Parents can take a maximum of 50 weeks as SPL, and a maximum of 37 weeks of Shared Parental Pay (ShPP). Shared Parental Pay will work like Statutory Maternity Pay, and is reclaimable by employers from HMRC. Parents can take SPL at a different time to their partner (or the other parent) or at the same time. For example, a woman can be on maternity leave and her partner can be on shared parental leave at the same time.

Eligibility and conditions

Note: for the purposes of this briefing we use "mother" for primary carer (birth or adoptive parent) and "father" for secondary carer.

SPL allows parents flexibility in how to share the care of their child in the first year. Parents will be able to share leave, and be off at the same time or alternate leave between them in different periods. Both parents have to meet conditions about their employment and earnings. If both meet

¹ Time Health and the Family 2014, Working Families

periods. Both parents have to meet conditions about their employment and earnings. If both meet the conditions they can split up to 50 weeks of SPL between them. If only one is entitled, they can decide how much time to take as SPL. New employees may not qualify for SPL or get ShPP, although their partner might be eligible (e.g. a father may not have worked for the employer long enough to qualify for SPL, but if the mother is eligible she may choose to split her time between maternity leave and SPL).

If your employee is the mother

To be eligible she needs to:

- Have worked for you for 26 weeks by the end of the 15th week before the baby is due (or by the date she is matched with a child for adoption) **and**
- Still be working for you right up until she takes SPL
- She will get ShPP if she earns at least £111 a week on average in a set period before the due date or matching for adoption (as for SMP and SAP)
- Her partner must also meet some employment and earnings conditions

She may take maternity leave in full, in accordance with existing maternity leave legislation. If she chooses to do this then SPL will not apply.

She may choose to return early from maternity leave, as now, and not take up any SPL options.

She may choose to convert some of her maternity leave into SPL and maternity pay into ShPP. To do this she must give notice that she will end maternity leave/adoption leave early, leaving some SPL to be taken by her partner or at a later date by her. She can do this by returning to work (notice is required), or she can ‘curtail’ maternity leave/pay or Maternity Allowance, giving notice that she will be returning early at a future date. This notification can be given before the birth. The weeks of leave remaining (and any of statutory pay) become available as SPL and ShPP. In most cases, this will be taken by her partner; but there may be cases where she wishes to break her maternity leave to return to work for a period and then complete her weeks of SPL at a later date.

How to calculate SPL entitlement	For example
52 weeks in total for maternity leave	52
Less Number of weeks taken before birth	4
Less Number of compulsory weeks (two or four)	2
Less Number of weeks taken since birth, if notification is given after that date	0
Total available to take as SPL	46

If your employee is the secondary carer (most often the father), they must:

- Have worked for you for 26 weeks by the end of the 15th week before the baby is due (or by the date he is matched with a child for adoption) **and**;
- Still be working for you right up to when he takes SPL
- Have a partner who must have worked for at least 26 weeks in the 66 weeks before the baby is due, and earn at least £30 week

He will bring you a declaration signed by him and by the mother, stating that he is eligible for SPL and how many weeks he intends to take. He will present a booking notice, which will set out the dates and patterns of leave he proposes. If this is a continuous block you must agree it. If it is in discontinuous blocks, you will be able to refuse the pattern but you must agree to a default. (It is important to understand the default provisions because they could make the difference between an employee withdrawing their notification and possibly applying again or them taking a continuous block of SPL instead. See the ACAS guidance here: <http://www.acas.org.uk/media/pdf/1/c/Shared-Parental-Leave-a-good-practice-guide-for-employers-and-employees.pdf>)

ACAS have provided detailed guidance on SPL for employers, including template letters. These are available at <http://www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=4911>.

Employers' concerns about fraud around SPL have been addressed by BIS and HMRC. They advise that the employee signed declaration of eligibility is sufficient. You may check with the other parent's employer, but there is no need to. Where you are matching contractual pay and benefits for SPL to your maternity package you may wish to see more evidence than the declaration, but consider the messages about trust that this will send to your employee.

If an employee meets the conditions and also earns at least £111 a week, they will be entitled to ShPP. This is 90 per cent of average earnings or £138.18, whichever is lower.

Notice and booking leave

To take SPL employees must:

- Give their employer written notice that they are entitled to SPL and how much they intend to take (this isn't binding, but gives an employer an indication)
- Separately (or at the same time if they wish), give at least eight weeks notice of the actual SPL periods they want to take

SPL can be booked in one block, or up to three separate blocks, and these blocks can be continuous or discontinuous. Employees can give notice up to three times if they wish to alter their leave. Employers do not have to agree to discontinuous leave. They do have to agree if an employee wants to book one block of continuous SPL. Note that an employee has three opportunities to give notice: you may, therefore, have to agree three *individual* (continuous) blocks of leave.

Return to work and keeping in touch

On return from SPL, an employee is entitled to return to the same job if the leave was 26 weeks or less. If the leave exceeds this and it is not reasonably practicable to return to the same job, they must be offered a suitable alternative.

Regardless of the length of SPL, each parent can work up to 20 'Shared Parental Leave in Touch' or SPLIT days without bringing the leave to an end. For example, an employee may request a block of 10 weeks SPL and work and be paid for 2 days each week without bringing SPL to an end. Such arrangements can be an affordable way for lower paid employees to achieve reduced hours flexible working for a fixed period if they are in receipt of ShPP and their employer pays them for their SPLIT days (as is good practice). There are advantages for both employers and employees. It allows for a phased return to work for mothers, and allows fathers to have a period of part time working. Later return to work is related to better retention for working mothers and there is evidence that time off

for fathers in the first year after birth is linked to family stability. Father engagement may also be boosted. Employers should consider promoting flexible ways of utilising SPLIT days to their staff as a positive way to enhance work and family balance during the first year.

Implementation for employers

Employers need to plan how they will implement SPL (and ShPP). There are a number of considerations that they will need to think about as they decide on the best way to configure SPL. These considerations can be broadly categorised as:

- Integrating SPL with existing provisions around maternity and paternity leave and pay
- Aligning SPL with strategic aims and values
- Costs, administration and take-up

There is significant overlap between these considerations, and they form a useful framework for employers as they decide on what will work best for their employees and the organisation. Whatever stage of readiness an organisation is at for the introduction of SPL, they will need to assess all the potential impacts that are likely to result in the immediate, and over the longer, term.

Weighing the options

Many organisations enhance pay and leave for maternity and paternity (and adoption leave), most commonly through enhancements to pay for extended periods of maternity leave. Paternity leave does not generally attract the same level of enhancement due to the shorter statutory period allowed. The introduction of SPL allows the possibility for fathers to take extended periods of time off work in the first 12 months of their child's life (replacing Additional Paternity Leave).

Organisations have a number of options. They may wish to do no more than offer SPL at the statutory minimum, leaving existing policies in place. They may wish to enhance SPL to existing maternity provisions; or they may wish to enhance SPL, but in a different way to maternity enhancement. Each approach must be carefully evaluated.

Different approaches in more detail

1 Organisations adopting only the **statutory minimum** for SPL may well do so on the grounds of minimising extra costs. However, there are other considerations that may deter employers from this approach. Lack of support for SPL may be perceived as an active discouragement to men taking a fatherhood role, and send conflicting messages around fatherhood to employees. Families may be seen as a burden, and female carer/male breadwinner-stereotypes reinforced. Careful consideration of organisational values and goals around equality and sustainability is required. There is also a potential risk of discrimination (see page 8).

2 **Enhancing SPL, but separately from other maternity enhancements** is an option that may appeal to employers who do not wish to match maternity, but want to encourage fathers to take a more active role in their child's first year. This approach would appear to be the most problematic as it carries with it a clear risk of discrimination. It also sends a less-than-positive message if not completely matched to existing maternity provisions. Employees might reasonably infer that the organisation's attitude towards fathers is less supportive than towards mothers. It may also

reinforce gendered stereotypes about caring and family involvement which will almost certainly be at odds with the organisation's values towards women at work.

3 Organisations who are planning to **match SPL to existing maternity provisions** will be constructing a powerful policy tool to promote inclusiveness and to challenge gender stereotypes about working and caring. This is likely to have positive impacts on female career progression, talent retention and employee engagement. However, to lower the costs of matching, some employers may consider reducing maternity enhancements. This is a step that should not be undertaken lightly: set against the benefits for partners, and the increased choice SPL offers parents, any removal of existing hard-won maternity enhancements to 'fund' SPL would likely be viewed negatively within the organisation. Employers who embark on this path risk creating dissonance between their values and practice, alienating women in the workplace and undermining trust. Unless carefully consulted upon and communicated, it could have negative effects on engagement, and send the message that the organisation is hardening away from supporting parents. Reputational damage could also be a consequence.

For large employers, and especially those employing large numbers of women, the marginal cost of matching SPL to maternity is likely to be low, in the region of a few full maternity leaves per annum. For more details on costs, see page 9.

4 A final option is that **organisations might adopt a wait-and-see position**, observing what others in their sector and more widely do before creating an SPL policy, and dealing with SPL in their own organisation on a case by case basis. This approach carries some risk. It will mean that colleagues will have no clear organisational policy framework within which to operate, support for line managers around dealing with requests and planning team cover will be scant, and the risk of inconsistent or discriminatory practice is raised. In addition, similarly to offering only the statutory minimum, lack of support may be seen as tacit discouragement of men taking a fatherhood role and indicative of the organisation's hostility towards men who wish to combine work and family life.

How many fathers will take up SPL?

The government's own estimates of SPL are that 8% of fathers will take it. Analysis of the nearest current equivalent, Additional Paternity Leave, has shown very low levels of take up of 1-2%. International evidence shows that for leave schemes that allow fathers extended periods of time off to care for young children, take up can be higher than is predicted than in the UK, but overall is relatively low when compared to the leave taken by mothers. Importantly, this international evidence shows that fathers only tend to take leave where it is ringfenced for their sole use and is paid at near-salary replacement levels.

Surveys in the UK give a mixed picture about potential uptake of SPL. An Institute of Leadership and Management report found that fewer than 1 in 10 men took more than their two weeks paternity leave, and predicted that take up of more leave would be inhibited by the twin obstacles of low pay and negative employer attitudes.² Social research by YouGov amongst men under 45, found that 30 per cent would take SPL beyond their two weeks Ordinary Paternity Leave, and that they envisage sharing the time off equally with their partner. Fifty two per cent of men also said the biggest barrier

² Shared opportunity: parental leave in UK Business, ILM 2014

to taking SPL is a financial one³. Other research, from the National Childbirth Trust showed a strong preference (76 per cent) amongst men for shared parental leave if they could combine it with shared part time working (e.g. this could mean one partner working two days a week and the other partner working three days a week for the first six months after their child is born). The same research found that a third of fathers wouldn't take SPL for financial reasons.⁴ Working Families own research has found that amongst younger fathers there is an appetite for greater involvement in caring for their young children, and where it is difficult for them to get this at work it translates into resentment towards their employer⁵. SPL is likely to appeal to these fathers.

Amongst Working Families members, anecdotal indications are that take-up could be as high as 20 per cent and that men will take between 4 and 12 weeks most likely when the new baby arrives and then again when the partner transitions back to work.

Discrimination

The Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) have advised that employers are not obliged to provide the same enhanced pay during SPL as that paid to women on maternity leave. However, legal commentators have raised questions regarding the potential risk of a discrimination claim where levels of enhanced pay differ for SPL and maternity leave, thereby denying men the same pay as women on maternity leave.

Where an employer matches SPL to existing maternity provisions the risk of discrimination is removed as both men and women are treated equally as parents. However, if matching is facilitated by a reduction of maternity enhancements this could, under some circumstances, be a breach of contract. Where an employer decides to only provide the statutory minimum for SPL or takes a wait and see approach then there is potential for gender discrimination against men. Women have the choice to opt for maternity leave rather than SPL, men do not. Where an employer enhances SPL, but not to the same level as maternity, there is a similar potential for discrimination as women may opt for maternity or SPL whilst men do not have this choice.

Ultimately whether an employer is obliged to match enhanced benefits during SPL to those paid on maternity leave will be decided through case law and this is likely to be a lengthy process being escalated to the European Court of Justice. The recent Employment Tribunal (ET) case of *Shuter v Ford Motor Company*⁶ is relevant for employers here, although it relates to APL and very specifically to Ford's gender strategy.

The ET found that paying only the statutory rate for additional paternity leave (APL) was justified. The case was brought by Mr Shuter, who took four months APL to look after his baby after his wife returned to work. His employer had, in 2005, introduced 100% basic pay for 52 weeks for maternity leave to achieve its diversity target of employing 25% women through improved recruitment and

³ YouGov/Sunday Times December 2013

⁴ NCT/Survation April 2014

⁵ Time, Health and the Family, Working families 2014

⁶ *Shuter v Ford Motor Co Ltd*. East London Employment Tribunal, 31.7.14 (3203504/13).

retention. However, male employees taking APL only received lower rate statutory paternity pay, which Mr Shuter argued was direct and indirect discrimination.

The ET disagreed. A female employee on maternity leave during the same period following the birth would have been entitled to full basic pay under the employer's maternity policy. However, there was no direct discrimination because the appropriate comparator for Mr Shuter was a female employee also taking APL, who would have been treated in the same way. The ET found that the policy afforded the special protection to women in connection with pregnancy and childbirth, which is permitted and not discriminatory under both UK and EU legislation. The ET also accepted the employer's aim of recruiting more women to its male dominated workforce amounted to objective justification of its policy even it had been discrimination

Specifically relating to Mr Shuter's reliance on EU law, in particular *Roca Álvarez v Sesa Start España ETT SA*⁷, the ET said that more recent cases, such as *Betriu Montull v Instituto Nacional de la Seguridad Social (INSS)*⁸, confirmed their understanding of EU law where there must be equal treatment for men and women except where the reason for a difference in treatment is the biological condition of pregnancy.

This case is very useful for employers who have a low proportion of female employees, and who offer enhanced maternity packages to aid recruitment and retention and build a better gender balance. Employers should note the importance placed by the ET on the objective business evidence with which Ford supported their strategy around employing and retaining women, which underpinned their enhanced maternity package. However, for employers whose workforce is female dominated or more evenly balanced, it may mean that they will find it difficult to objectively justify not extending enhanced maternity packages to men who want to take a greater role in the care of their children.

Costs and administration

Costs to employers can be categorised as those incurred through the introduction of ShPP and those that come from the administration of SPL.

Costs around the administration of SPL are harder to quantify. For example, if parents take periods of discontinuous leave then the associated administrative costs will be higher. However, it is possible to argue that benefits that accrue from a well supported SPL policy will offset both the costs of the enhancement and the administration. This includes increases in engagement level of fathers (who are the group most at risk of disengagement resulting from work-life imbalance⁹). The active promotion of SPL to build equality has the potential for reducing disruption through shorter maternity leave. International experience shows that take-up by men is influenced by seniority with less senior men being more likely to take up shared leave. It could be argued that where professional/managerial women become pregnant, they are more likely to be one of the one-in-

⁷ *Roca Álvarez v Sesa Start España ETT SA*. ECJ, 2010 EQLR 238.

⁸ *Betriu Montull v Instituto Nacional de la Seguridad Social (INSS)*. ECJ, 2013 ICR 1323.

⁹ *Time, Health and the Family*, *ibid*

three¹⁰ working mothers who are the main breadwinner and the use of SPL will mean shorter periods of maternity leave and will decrease disruption at a senior level.

Calculating costs – SPL calculator

Direct costs of SPL are estimated to be similar to a minimal increase in current maternity leave. To estimate the increase in cost a comparison with equivalent maternity leave has been made in the table below. This model assumes both costs associated with the continuation of contractual benefits during the leave period, (e.g. pension contributions and healthcare) and enhanced pay, are matched to current maternity pay. The model also assumes that SPL is most likely to be taken in parallel to maternity leave in the first 3 months following birth. For completeness different scenarios are presented to reflect the different levels of enhanced maternity pay that might be on offer in different organisations (shown as Equivalent Full Pay (EFP) maternity enhancements).

Cost of SPL assuming enhanced benefits matched to Mat Leave, shown as equivalent maternity leaves for every 100 maternities

Current maternity pay: weeks at Equivalent full pay (EFP) / Percentage of fathers taking leave	EFP mat 18wks	EFP mat 26wks	EFP mat 40wks
10% fathers take 4 weeks	2 mat leaves	1.5 mat leaves	1 mat leave
10% fathers take 8 weeks	4.5 mat leaves	3 mat leaves	2 mat leaves
2% fathers take 12 weeks	1.5 mat leaves	1 mat leave	0.5 mat leave
10% fathers take 12 weeks	6.5 mat leaves	4.5 mat leaves	3 mat leaves

(Rounded to nearest 0.5 mat leave)

Equivalent Full Pay can be calculated by adding together the existing financial package awarded to mothers on maternity. This comprises the period on full pay, the period of part pay (as EFP), and any return to work bonus or benefits (as EFP). Estimating levels of predicted paternity leaves to enable calculations can be taken from existing organisational data about paternity leave take up.

See the attached SPL Calculator spreadsheet for more details or find it at www.workingfamilies.org.uk.

Recommendations

This section considers how best organisations can communicate and support policy, and ensure that SPL supports goals and values, and functions as a real driver of engagement, motivation and performance.

¹⁰ IPPR 2013

Communications

Awareness of SPL is already higher than it has been for APL, and take up is likely to be higher than it ever was for APL. The Working Families legal advice helpline, for example, shows women and men already enquiring about eligibility and entitlement. Organisations have a clear role in communicating the new opportunities that SPL brings to both prospective fathers and mothers. The concept of a shared period of leave is a new one and employees and their managers will need detailed guidance to help them navigate the leave request and return process. Line managers will need training and support: although line managers have been found to be broadly supportive of SPL, they do have concerns about complexity¹¹. Employers will need to be clear when communicating with mothers about moving from maternity to SPL, especially for those organisations who are not matching provisions and where mother will move to ShPP.

Communications should not be restricted to the technical issues or awareness raising, however. SPL provides a real opportunity for organisations to demonstrate their support for parents, and their commitment to equality within the wider context of a supportive work-life culture. It will also be essential for organisations to record the experience of parents who take SPL, both to enable the adjustment of policy if required and also to provide evidence and positive case studies to drive further take-up.

As part of this communication, employers should emphasise that leave should, if possible, be booked early to enable planning to take place and to provide as much predictability for the employee and the organisation as possible. Although an employee may subsequently vary the request, it is beneficial to both sides to encourage early notification of eligibility and intention to take SPL.

Employers are encouraged to actively promote SPL to fathers in their workforce in order to ensure that they feel confident in taking it up, that it is acceptable and welcome, and that it carries no career penalty. Communication with fathers will need real thought and investment. They need to be tailored to a father audience to avoid the common issue of family friendly communications, where they are mistakenly perceived to be for women or mothers and not intended for men.

Matching to existing maternity provisions

Employers should seriously consider matching contractually enhanced pay and benefits during SPL to those currently available on maternity leave. They should develop a communication plan that leverages this benefit to become an employer of choice. The potential gains, from an engagement point of view, are substantial, and there are also sustainability benefits too. The workplace of the future will be shaped by the aspirations and values of a younger generation of workers, who will have an expectation of more equally shared work and parenting, and opportunities for full participation in family life. These are trends that are already visible and will become more prevalent. Employers have an opportunity to differentiate, and the forthcoming introduction of SPL is a significant opportunity to occupy a position in the vanguard of family friendly employment practice.

At present, many Working Families members do not feel ready to match yet, but nevertheless remain committed to creating inclusive workplaces which support fathers. For these employers, we

¹¹ Part B: Employer perceptions of maternity and paternity leave and flexible working arrangements, BIS 2014

recommend that communications strategies are put in place which promote SPL as a new statutory right which the organisation welcomes and which it encourages all employees who are expecting or planning children to consider for their family. Women employees need to be made aware of the opportunities (and they may have partners working for employers who are matching SPL to existing maternity provision); and men whose partners work for non-matching companies may also wish to take up some SPL, as the financial effect on their family will be the same, whichever parent is in receipt of statutory pay.

Employer case studies

What will employers be doing? The Deputy Prime Minister, Nick Clegg, has already announced plans that male and female civil service employees will be offered equal parental pay and support from April 2015, a welcome commitment intended to ensure that SPL is a realistic option for families. Here, senior HR leaders, reflect on how their organisations have approached the introduction of SPL.

Anonymous, large private sector organisation

Q What is your overall organisational attitude towards shared parental leave:

We see SPL as a very welcome development, it's part of the bigger cultural change that will enable families to make real choices. And it is part of being a 21st century organisation that recognises the changing needs of our employees and the changing ways they want to live their lives.

We don't have concerns about costs, in the sense that we think they are manageable. We do have concerns about complexity and are taking steps to simplify things, but it will be complex to explain to colleagues and to line managers. Though again, we think this is manageable.

Q How long have you been planning for the introduction of SPL?

We have been engaged in detailed planning for the past three months or so. We have looked at what is in place already, how SPL will fit with our existing family policies, what kind of organisation we want to be going forward, working out the likely costs, talking to our mums and dads about what SPL would look like and what the issues might be for them. For many of them, they don't know either! They haven't thought it through particularly. And we have been preparing briefings for line managers, information for staff, making sure all the HR teams have the relevant knowledge to deal with any questions from employees. These are huge system changes which are underway – even if you are going to trust your employees, as we are, there is still going to be the need to have a system to manage the process when a new father comes to us and says he wants to take SPL. So a lot of the cost will be the pure admin cost of setting it all up. And obviously we have also gone through the whole governance process – it has been quite a detailed piece of planning.

Q What do you expect uptake of SPL amongst fathers to be?

We have surveyed our employees – it's all so new, and people are still thinking about it. But we have quite a high take-up of paternity leave and so we imagine that the majority of our new fathers will take a short period of leave at the beginning, probably two to four weeks taken concurrently with the mother's maternity leave.

Q Do you have any insight about how parents might like to take SPL?

Our sense is that leave is more likely to be taken in one block. For us, the main thing is to have enough time in terms of planning. It would be easiest of course in one block, but really the trick is to have enough notice from the employee, however they want to take it.

Q How are you communicating SPL to your employees?

We are working on this at the moment (October 2014) – we will have to put a major programme in place.

Q Have you decided yet in what form you will implement SPL (e.g. matched to maternity, statutory minimum etc.)

We are going to match to maternity.

Carolanne Minashi, EMEA Head of Diversity, Employee Relations and Engagement

Q What is your overall organisational attitude towards shared parental leave?

We welcome this as a development that gives greater choice for new Parents on how to share both care and work during the first year of a new baby's life. Our approach to Maternity Leave both in terms of discretionary enhanced pay, and additional support has served our business well in terms of very high retention rates and employer reputation, we are looking at SPL through the same lens. We have a whole new generation of men becoming Fathers who want to be more involved with their children, SPL offers them a chance to do just that. Furthermore SPL supports our Diversity and Inclusion strategy as it applies to same sex families as well.

Q Does it resonate with existing values?

Absolutely, Citi has been working to support new parents for many years not only with best-in-class policies but also additional support for employees going through Maternity and Paternity Leave and also additional training for line managers in how to effectively lead individuals and teams through parent leave transitions. This is an important part of our talent agenda – retaining and developing our staff for the long term.

Q Are there concerns about complexity/costs/disruption?

When we first started working on our policy approach, we were cautious of the 'discontinuous blocks' aspect of SPL – we have a lot of experience in managing long Maternity Leaves well, but the stop-start offering embedded in SPL is completely new to us. However, through our internal discovery work we found that a) our employees were more interested in taking sequences of shorter periods of time than we first thought, and b) our business leaders are confident that managing shorter periods of absence may actually be easier for them than the traditional multi month absences that our current pattern of Maternity Leave provides.

Q How long have you been panning for the introduction of SPL?

We have been working on SPL for 12 months. During that time we did extensive external research – i.e. looking at other jurisdictions where similar SPL type provisions have been in place for a while. We partnered with a peer company (not in Financial Services) and worked collaboratively as thought partners, sharing ideas and modelling different approaches. We attended briefing sessions by legal firms and organisations like Working Families. Internally, we canvassed opinion from a range of senior leaders, we surveyed employees who had either taken Paternity or Maternity Leave with us over the last 3 years, we ran financial modelling with our partners in Finance. Finally we took our proposal to our Leadership Group for the UK.

Q What do you expect uptake of SPL amongst fathers to be?

Our survey showed that around 20% of eligible fathers would be interested in taking some level of SPL

Q Other surveys have shown that mothers may be unwilling to relinquish maternity leave: have you detected similar?

Our survey results showed that 80% our female employees are interested in giving up some of their Maternity Leave so their partner can take SPL. There was a difference though in the number of weeks of SPL that dads and mums would consider – with women being more conservative in the number of weeks they would consider converting

Q Do you have any insight about how parents might like to take SPL? In one block or discontinuous ones?

We think there will be a variety of models, one pattern has emerged though of Dads interested in extending their Ordinary Paternity Leave period by 1-2 weeks to have the first month at home with new baby before returning to work and then maybe returning to SPL at the very end of the leave period to support Mum in a back to work transition.

Q Which is best for your business in terms of planning?

We are confident we can cope with either.

Q How are you communicating SPL to your employees?

We have a communications strategy that will start with a soft launch this Autumn for those expecting babies in the Spring. We will extend the content of our Managing Parental Leave workshops to ensure that SPL is covered. These workshops are mandatory for all UK based managers. We will also be rolling out training for our HR colleagues and running information sessions via our Parents Network.

Q Have you decided yet in what form you will implement SPL (e.g. matched to maternity, statutory minimum etc.)

Citi will be offering SPL on similar terms to our Maternity Leave offering – i.e. 26 weeks enhanced discretionary pay. The principle of Inclusion equal treatment is a core value for us. We are proud of our tradition and reputation for progress and see our approach to SPL as an extension of that.

Civil Service Employee Policy

Q What is your overall organisational attitude towards shared parental leave?

We welcome the new entitlement to shared parental leave for all eligible parents from April 2015. This will give both parents, including those who adopt, much greater choice and flexibility around how they balance child-caring responsibilities between them.

Q How long have you been planning for the introduction of SPL?

We have been planning for the introduction of SPL since the initial Modern Workplace Consultation response in November 2012. This planning has included reviewing all consultation documents, the Children and Families Act and Bill, liaising with key stakeholders as well as researching what other countries do for their provision of parental leave.

Q What do you expect uptake of SPL amongst fathers to be?

Taking SPL will require a cultural shift in terms of how parents manage the care of their children in the year following their birth or adoption. Therefore, we anticipate that take up will be gradual.

Q How are you communicating SPL to your employees?

We have developed products to support with implementation. We are using a multimedia approach to let employees know ensuring that information is readily available for all employees.

Q Have you decided yet in what form you will implement SPL (e.g. matched to maternity, statutory minimum etc.)

We will be an exemplar of the new entitlement to Shared Parental Leave, which allows working parents to decide how they share time off work after their child is born or adopted. Shared Parental Leave will be paid at the same occupational rate as maternity leave.

Working Families Employer Briefing

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