



working families

TOP EMPLOYERS

changing the way we live and work

BENCHMARK REPORT 2015

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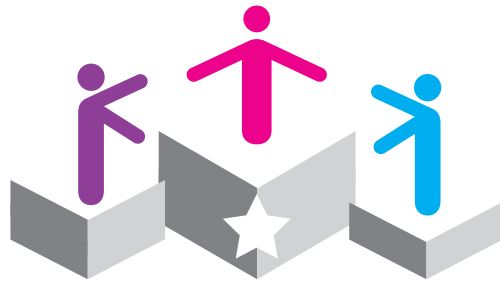
working families 

In association with



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TOP EMPLOYERS

BENCHMARK REPORT 2015

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changing the way we live and work

Sponsors



Julian Foster
Managing Director,
Computershare

Computershare

More and more employers now embrace working practices that value home life. The best employees have rounded existences, and the best employers do not force their staff to compromise their commitment to their families. Flexible working creates happier and healthier workforces that are hard-working, committed and loyal. They also attract the best and brightest recruits, increase the organisation's reputation and, ultimately, improve the bottom line. But there is still a long way to go before these practices are inherent in the nation's working lives.

Families are at the heart of what Computershare does – both within the culture of our own workplaces and through the services we offer. We currently work with more than 14,000 employers to provide childcare vouchers to over 140,000 working parents and over 120,000 carers every month. In addition, more than 16,000 employers currently rely on us for an easy and convenient method of adopting family-friendly working practices through our Salary Extras systems.

As a result, Computershare is again proud to be working with Working Families on their benchmark and awards for top employers. By recognising examples of excellent working practices, we can help share the best ideas and encourage every organisation to improve the way they empower employees to share success at work and enjoy their lives beyond. After the success of last year, we're really looking forward to hearing again the great stories of employers going the extra mile to support their staff – and reaping the rewards as an organisation.



Mark Ursell
Managing Director,
T Poll



Tpoll is a leader in online market research specialising in cost-effective, consumer and employee insight. Tpoll combines the latest research techniques with powerful IT systems to put insight at the centre of day to day business operations. Tpoll's approach leverages the use of the internet in everyday life to bring management teams a continuous flow of consumer and employee insight. Combined with expert research methods the insight flows through the business driving success at every level

Welcome



Sarah Jackson
CEO, Working Families



Mary Mercer
Senior Associate Consultant,
Institute for Employment Studies

The Top Employers benchmark is in its sixth year (fifth in its current format). Half a decade of gathering detailed information about work-life and family friendly policies from some of the UK's leading organisations provides a wealth of information about the evolution of recent work-life practice and thinking. It is fascinating to see how far we have come even in that short time within some areas: fathers have steadily risen up the agenda, and the support for flexibility and family friendly working has embedded solidly into the top of many organisations, for example.

Looking backwards, we can see that many organisations have been in advance of legislation around work-life issues, with flexible working often made widely available to all employees ahead of the expansions of the Right to Request. The benchmark, therefore, offers not only a retrospective view of the development of work life practice, but also some perspective of what might happen next as organisations push forwards. As economic headwinds have abated (if not disappeared) for many organisations, other challenges are revealed: line managers and cultural change are two issues that employers are increasingly focussing on.

The 2015 benchmark is also the first one to take a look at the way that organisations are setting up their Shared Parental Leave schemes. The new policies that have been formulated are set out here for the first time, providing unique insight into how SPL is being managed and integrated alongside existing offerings for maternity, paternity and other parental leave. How SPL develops and is adjusted as practitioners start to see take up will be examined in future benchmarks. The 2015 Top Employers Benchmark is the start, and will remain at the forefront of tracking this new area of practice.

As always, we are grateful to all the organisations who support and participate in the benchmark.

About the Benchmark

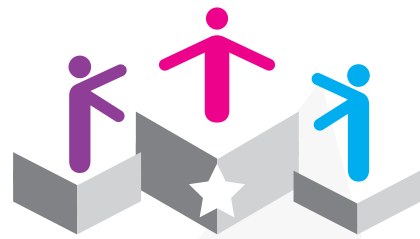
The Top Employers Benchmark is now in its sixth year, and continues to provide participating employers with the most comprehensive and detailed insights into their flexible working and worklife integration policies and practices, affording them the opportunity to see how they measure up against other organisations.

Over 120 organisations have now completed the benchmark, representing over 1.3million employees. Engagement with the benchmark remains high, with a mixture of new companies participating for the first time in 2015, and many others returning to it as they seek to refine and improve their worklife strategies and activities, and establish their flexible and family friendly reputations.

Some organisations benchmark annually, others are working to a longer business cycle, benchmarking every two or three years; benchmarking can be particularly useful for organisations embarking on change programmes or introducing new initiatives as a way of understanding and quantifying their existing worklife position and evaluating the effects of change.

The Small and Medium Employers Benchmark is now in its third year, attracting high-quality entrants, and demonstrating that good practice and innovation are flourishing in this sector.

The objective of the Small and Medium Employers Benchmark is to help these companies not only to understand how well they are doing, but also to develop consistent and fair processes around worklife and family-friendly activities. It also encourages small employers to think about how they can observe the effects of a worklife approach on their business, and how to capture and measure those impacts.



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TOP TEN EMPLOYERS

listed alphabetically

American Express

Barclays Bank PLC

Centrica

Citi

Deloitte LLP

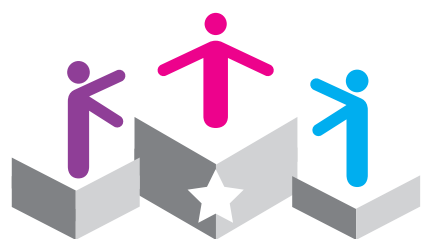
DWF LLP

EY

Lloyds Banking Group

Ministry of Justice

Southdown Housing Association



working families

TOP EMPLOYERS

RANKED 11-30

listed alphabetically

Addleshaw Goddard LLP

Aimia

Chelsea & Westminster Hospital NHS
Foundation Trust

Computershare

Hogan Lovells

iCrossing

KPMG LLP

National Assembly for Wales

Oliver Wyman

Pinsent Masons LLP

Royal Mail Group

Santander UK

Simmons & Simmons

Sysdoc Limited

The London School of Economics and
Political Science

The Scottish Government

The University of Lincoln

UBS AG

Wales & West Housing

Westfield Europe Limited

Key themes

Building on previous benchmarks, we have seen policy provision steadily become more comprehensive.

Many organisations now have significant new policy in place, covering both their general employee populations and bespoke schemes and arrangements for specific groups of employees who may require them. However, as practitioners know, having access to the same policies doesn't guarantee the same outcomes, and the culture of organisations is the determining factor in policy translating into practice.

The 2015 benchmark results show that employers are beginning to increase their analysis of existing data to find a way to understand their internal cultures, and to use this to scrutinise more effectively the way that policy and practice are interacting.

Key themes for 2015 are:

1. Organisational attitudes and support

Attitudes towards flexibility and flexible workers are generally supportive. Strong senior support is commonplace, but support from line managers continues to be key and not uncomplicated. Meanwhile, the improving financial outlook provides an opportunity for new gains.

2. Policy change and support

Many participants in the benchmark have accumulated a comprehensive range of policies and schemes to support employees. Shared parental leave provides an insight into how new policy is being developed, while we are also seeing an increase in flexible hiring and default flexibility.

3. Understanding practice

We are seeing an increased focus on understanding the impact and effectiveness of policy in practice, with a gradual increase in the metrics which organisations are able to provide.

1. Organisational attitudes and support

Strong senior support for flexible working and work-life balance is commonplace in 2015. Most organisations (88%) enjoy proactive support from the main board supplemented with a steering group to develop a high performance, flexible and family-friendly work culture. Similarly to 2014, although employers have strong internal support, this does not necessarily translate into overt statements about their beliefs: just over half (55%) explicitly mention their commitment to family friendly and flexible working in an organisational vision or values statement.

Attitudes towards flexibility and flexible workers was generally positive: work-life balance is largely perceived as a natural part of the employee experience, and employees who worked in different ways were not viewed differently to colleagues. It was felt the responsibility for work-life issues should be shared between the individual, the line manager and team. However, there were indications that, in 2015, support from line managers might not be uncomplicated. There was evidence that for some line managers, work-life balance is an individual issue that line managers need to work around. Lack of line management skill was also cited as a barrier by 38% of organisations, whilst lack of line manager support was identified by 17%. Flexibility may, therefore, require a better trained line management level to become truly embedded, and it is probable that opposition to flexibility will fall if line managers' skills are developed. Line managers are actively encouraged to work in a flexible or family friendly way in 90% of organisations, but only a quarter have trained above 75% of their line managers in managing other flexible workers.

The number of organisations pointing to the economic climate as a barrier to flexibility has fallen to 48%, down from 60% in 2014. Just over a quarter (28%) point to a lack of resources as an issue. The improving financial outlook is an opportunity to make new gains, and may partially account for the support afforded to new Shared Parental Leave Schemes. However, there is still a gap between positive beliefs about flexibility and flexible working and barriers to further developing flexibility as a business-enhancing way of working. The benefits need to be communicated as a way to help resolve organisational economic challenges.



MANAGER ENGAGEMENT



Wales and West Housing

Leadership at WWH is not about the job title, position, level or status – it's about behaviour, skills and attitude. The organisation is investing in its leaders to develop their thinking and actions to build great relationships and enable effective conversations on all topics. All line managers, whether a head of service or a part-time scheme manager, must attend each of the seven days' training. Fairness is one of WWH's five values and it invests equally in all staff regardless of their working pattern, personal circumstances or gender.

WWH assesses leadership strengths, not just operational performance. An individual's responsibility for delivering great leadership is an explicit part of their role profile and is assessed during recruitment and as a specific part of 'Development Conversations' held throughout the year.

2. Policy change and support

2.1 Shared Parental Leave

As noted, many organisations have now accumulated a comprehensive range of policies and schemes that support employees, and many are very similar to those of other employers. This policy development has meant that many employers are focussing activities around fine adjustments to and supporting policy, rather than developing new policy areas. However, this year does see a major new policy area, Shared Parental Leave.

58% are matching SPL to existing enhanced maternity provisions

29% are providing the statutory minimum

13% are yet to formalise policy and are taking a 'wait and see' approach

0% are cutting back enhanced maternity to fund enhanced SPL entitlements

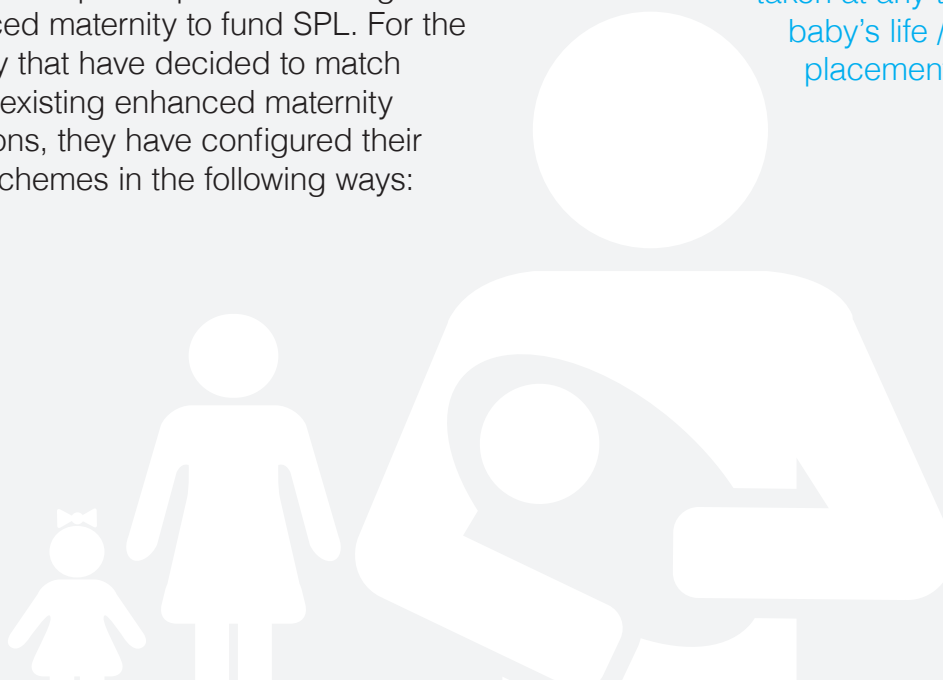
The majority are matching SPL to existing maternity provision, a welcome approach that maximises the potential for take-up. Costs may be a factor for those who are offering the statutory minimum, but is encouraging that no employers have taken up the option of clawing back enhanced maternity to fund SPL. For the majority that have decided to match SPL to existing enhanced maternity provisions, they have configured their leave schemes in the following ways:

56% individually matched and floating
(Number of potential weeks enhanced pay available to a partner taking SPL is the same as the number of weeks enhanced maternity pay available to mothers. SPL can be taken at any time during the first year of baby's life / following parental order / placement for adoption.)

17% individually matched and tied
(Number of potential weeks enhanced pay available to a partner taking SPL is the same as the number of weeks enhanced maternity pay available to mothers. Weeks of enhanced pay are tied to the date of birth, e.g. 18 weeks enhanced pay must be taken in the 18 weeks following birth.)

11% family shared and tied
(Number of potential weeks enhanced pay available to a partner taking SPL is the same as the number of weeks enhanced maternity pay available to mothers less any weeks of statutory maternity pay and leave the mother has taken/ intends to take (regardless of who the mother is working for). Weeks of enhanced pay are tied to the date of birth, e.g. 18 weeks enhanced pay must be taken in the 18 weeks following birth.)

17% family shared and floating
(Number of potential weeks enhanced pay available to a partner taking SPL is the same as the number of weeks enhanced maternity pay available to mothers less any weeks of statutory maternity pay and leave the mother has taken/ intends to take (regardless of who the mother is working for). Weeks of enhanced pay can be taken at any time during the first year of baby's life / following parental order / placement for adoption.)



It is again encouraging that the majority of employers who have chosen to match SPL to maternity have decided on the option that allows the most flexibility for families by not tying the period of leave to the birth of the child (within the first year of the baby's life or adoption). Evidence from other countries with similar schemes for families shows that take up rates and maximum utility depend upon good levels of pay, flexibility in how and when leave can be taken and a culture in which leave-takers are supported. Sixty one per cent of matching organisations said that the resulting package is the same for maternity and shared parental entitlement, a significant step in levelling the policy playing field between mothers and fathers. The 2016 benchmark will begin to monitor take up of SPL, and, as organisations gain their first real experience of their SPL schemes this year and next we anticipate policy refinements and changes to schemes. As Additional Paternity Leave phases out, it is to be hoped that the more generous and equitable opportunity that SPL affords fathers will lead to higher levels of take up than APL was ever able to deliver.

In terms of administering SPL, there is evidence that some organisations are taking a different approach with their policies around access to enhanced maternity leave and SPL. 87% have qualifying or other conditional criteria attached to their enhanced maternity leave policies, while only 68% attach conditions to receiving enhanced SPL benefits. Although not a significant difference, it may indicate that maternity leave, in some organisations, remains the 'best' leave (in terms of pay and conditions and employee perception) with commensurate conditions attached. It is noted here, at the first sight of SPL policy, that it will be interesting to see over the next couple of years whether maternity and SPL converge in response to take up, or enhanced maternity becomes, in the view of employees, a place at the top of the hierarchy of leave available to parents.



FLEXIBLE RECRUITMENT



National Assembly of Wales

Employees have access to a range of flexible working options, including; flexible working hours, part time working, term time working, career breaks, compressed hours and job sharing. Most notably they have this from day one of employment. All new starters are presented with the flexible options available to them as part of the induction process. Flexible working options are even advertised during the recruitment process.

Every new role that is created or is being replaced must accommodate flexible working unless the manager submits a business case demonstrating the reasoning and evidence behind why it cannot. This system ensures that, unless a strong case to the contrary is put forward, all of The Assembly's jobs are advertised as being open to flexible working.



**happy to
talk flexible
working**

2.2 Flexible working and flexible hiring

There are signs in the 2015 benchmark that employers are being more systematic in their recruitment activities when it comes to building in flexibility. 45% are routinely looking at jobs before advertising them to assess their potential for flexibility, up from a third in 2014. The proportion of line managers who must justify a full-time position remained broadly static at 35%, although it is noteworthy that only 10% ask line managers to justify a flexible pattern. There has also been a welcome increase in the number of employers who state their commitment to flexible and family friendly working in their recruitment campaigns. It should be remembered that the most effective way to assure potential recruits of the commitment to flexibility is a twin approach of flagging up the openness to talking about flexibility both in general and in the individual job description specifically.

Flexible working itself is widely available, with the most common arrangement available being part-time or reduced hours working. Working at home on occasion was available in just over half of employers, with the main restriction being by function. Seniority was not a barrier to flexibility for any way of working in any organisation. It is evident that employers are keen to make as much flexibility available as they can to employees in terms of supportive policy provision. Uptake of flexible working is dominated by women: 75% of flexible workers were women. The gender imbalance was most apparent in reduced hours and part time work (88% women), job share (86% women) and term time working (82% women).

There is widespread support for breaks from work, like sabbaticals, and other short-term arrangements to enable employees to negotiate their work-life fit. However, sabbatical take-up was not well reported and where it was, take up was low. There is considerable under-used potential in allowing extended periods of time away from work, as the example below shows:



FLEXIBLE WORKING



'Time out' at Deloitte

Time Out was introduced in summer 2014 in recognition of the fact people were balancing family and other personal commitments alongside demanding careers. Time Out allows any employee with over a year's service to request a four-week block of extra leave, unsalaried but with continuing benefits allowances, to be taken at a mutually acceptable time. Employees can request a Time Out each year with the hope they return to work re-energised.

Time Out has been very successful in supporting the organisation's women in leadership ambitions with 55% of the requests coming from female employees, the majority of whom are operating at the level of manager or above – a critical retention point of women for Deloitte.

3. Understanding practice

There was an increased focus on understanding the way that policy is applying in organisations, through the lens of a range of metrics. Since its inception, the Top Employers benchmark has offered employers the opportunity to record some very detailed data about who is doing what within their organisation. The aim here is twofold: to get an insight into how well policies are translating into practice (who are they being used by etc.) and how other activities like comms and manager training are supporting policy; and to provide an initial framework that employers might adapt to obtain a fuller understanding of the reality of their work-life initiatives and to develop an evidence base to tackle barriers and make the most of opportunities. In 2015 the gradual increase in the metrics that organisations are able to provide continues, but there remain significant gaps. It is essential to understand that some organisations do not believe these gaps to be significant. Instead, they have an approach to flexibility that has, over a number of years, focused on de-centralising and spreading it throughout the organisation to ensure that it embeds at a fundamental level. Creating this widespread culture of flexibility means that it is not possible to capture what is going on across the whole organisation, as individuals and teams make local decisions about ways of working that are not capturable by any system. However, for employers who may be concerned about line manager buy-in to a work-life approach, or, in an international or dispersed organisation, encountering scepticism, an evidence-based approach will be crucial.

For other organisations, the benefits of collecting data are clear, particularly when trialling a new initiative or building a case for support from senior leaders. The Cafcass case study demonstrates how understanding the effects of flexible working practices has driven progress and organisational change:



FLEXIBLE WORKING



Quantifying the benefits at Cafcass

Cafcass has undergone a wholesale transformation; in 2010 the Public Accounts Committee declared Cafcass as 'not fit for purpose' and Ofsted inspections between 2007 and 2010 raised significant concerns. Furthermore, from 2009 Cafcass faced additional challenges, with care application demand rising 75.4% between 2008/09 to 2013/14 and their budget reducing by £6m from 2010 to 2014.

changing the way we live



The total organisational and cultural transformation has been enabled by becoming entirely flexible. Cafcass has invested in technology to enable staff to focus on the front line, and provided its workforce the tools and resources they need to allow daily routines around work, family and personal commitments to be managed by the individual.

There is no requirement for staff to be in the office as performance is measured on output, not visibility, while a workload weighting system ensures a fair distribution of cases within a team.

Cafcass has measured its outcomes and registered impressive results:

- *105,000 hours, previously spent on administrative activities, freed up by 4G laptops*
- *94% of staff work remotely once a month*
- *Sickness rates decreased by 55% from 16.2 days per person in 2009/10 to 7.3 days per person in 2013/14, reducing the cost of absence from £3.2m to £1.8m*
- *Most importantly, flexible working has contributed to improved service delivery timescales: care and adoption cases (public law) down from 57 weeks in 2011/12 to 31 weeks in 2013/14, and completion times for divorce and separation cases (private law) reduced from 29 weeks in 2011/12 to 18 weeks in 2013/14.*

The transformation has been validated externally. In 2014 Cafcass was assessed as 'good with outstanding leadership' by Ofsted.

Developing systems to capture detailed metrics can be problematic (and expensive) for organisations, and the capture of informal flexible working information is particularly difficult. Nonetheless, the 2015 benchmark shows that there are a number of areas where organisations are gathering data, but are only making partial use of it. Here, developing a fuller understanding of what the data can deliver might be a good place for those organisations to see what a more detailed approach might provide.

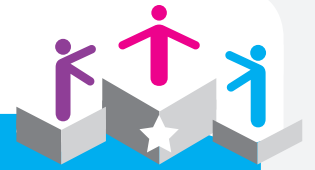
For example, overall applications and approvals for flexible working requests made under the Right to Request are recorded: but fewer than half of organisations look at this information by gender, grade or approver. However, employers have increased their scrutiny in other areas, for example performance appraisal, where outcomes are tracked against gender, working style and appraiser by the majority, and clear improvements in data gathering are apparent from 2014 to 2015.

Linking metrics to assessments of organisational performance is a longer term goal for many employers. Although 50% were able to link flexibility and family friendly working to improved employee wellbeing, only a third were able to make a link between flexibility and financial performance.

Describing the benefits of flexibility may be achieved in a number of ways, from attitudinal surveys, employer reputation and sustainability. Detailed information and data offers another way to describe the success of flexible programmes and also offers the opportunity to tailor and develop them in response to opportunities of problem 'hot spots'. Organisations should consider how they might fully exploit the information they already have, and what their next target could be for 2016.



FLEXIBLE WORKING



Metrics at Barclays

Barclays has made its belief in flexible working real through a wholesale commitment to change. Its year-long Dynamic Working Campaign (DWC), developed in 2014, recognised that people have many roles throughout each life stage, at home and at work, and need time, flexibility and energy to fulfil them all. DWC has developed a culture where working dynamically in non-traditional ways is embraced. The aim was to fundamentally 'refresh' the practice of flexible working, a day-one right at Barclays, to reduce costs and capitalise on the greater productivity that agile staff bring and to further improve the working culture for 140,000 UK and global employees.

DWC encompassed research data demonstrating organisational benefits of flexible working to use in with key stakeholders and influencers. This data included usage aspects such as DWC portal hits and wider impact measures related to talent attraction and retention – for example monitoring data (working parents and female talent), engagement (via employee opinion scores) and employee wellbeing (via absenteeism and sickness rates). Relevant metrics are collated and analysed half-yearly by senior leaders in support of the wider 'Go-To' employer goal.

50%

of organisations surveyed recognised that offering flexible, family friendly working meant improved employee wellbeing

MAKE THE
2016
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EMPLOYERS
TOP
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QUICKBITES™

Minimising stress, maximising resilience for parents and carer employees. Support for high-performance flexible working.



For flexible employers
KNOWLEDGEBITES™

Evidence based expert solutions to build and support high-performing flexible workforces.



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changing the way we live and work

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