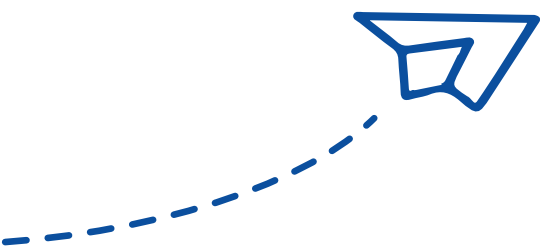


Working Families' Impact

2019 - 2020





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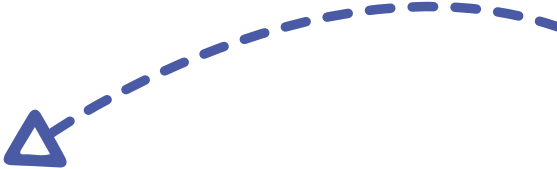
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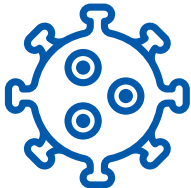
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By the Numbers



In FY 2019-2020, we worked hard to remove the barriers that people with caring responsibilities face in the workplace. Below is a snapshot of our progress.



36,000+

In the first three weeks after they were created, our COVID advice web pages helped over 36,000 parents and carers navigate the uncertainty of the pandemic.



1 million+

We helped inform over 1 million parents and carers about their employment rights through the advice pages on our website, a 32% increase from last year.



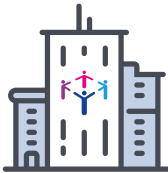
1,940

Our legal advice helpline empowered nearly 2,000 parents and carers to fight for their rights at work.



63%

of the people who received legal advice from us were on a low income.



132

We supported 132 employers in creating flexible, family-friendly cultures.



1 million+

employees were impacted by our work with our employer members.



1.1 million+

people visited the Working Families website, a 28% increase from last year.



5.8 million

people saw our campaign for National Work Life Week on social media, a 45% increase from last year.



236+

pieces of media coverage mentioned Working Families.



A Message from the Chairman and the CEO

We are delighted to present Working Families' latest impact report, capturing our achievements in Financial Year 2019-2020.

Working Families is the UK's work-life balance organisation. Our mission is to remove the barriers that people with caring responsibilities face in the workplace. We drive positive change by supporting and advocating for working parents and carers, collaborating with employers to build flexible and family-friendly cultures, and influencing government policy.

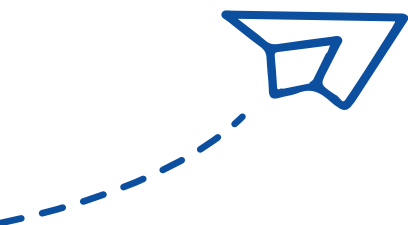
It's unusual that the last month of a financial year transforms how we view the year as a whole. But that's exactly what the onset of COVID-19 has done. The pandemic has put in stark focus the urgency of our work to support working parents and carers. Below are some highlights of how we furthered this mission in 2019-2020.

Helping working parents and carers

- For the first time ever, we had over 1 million people visit our legal advice web pages.
- We published a new guide for parents of disabled children (funded by the Morrisons Foundation), updated a timeline of rights and benefits for pregnant women and new mothers, and created a comprehensive toolkit for new parents – all downloadable for free on the charity's website.
- When COVID-19 hit in March, we handled unprecedented demand on our legal advice helpline, with a four-fold increase of calls and e-mails. We developed dedicated coronavirus advice pages on our website, which had 36,000 visitors in the three weeks leading up to the end of the financial year.

Supporting employers

- We ended the financial year with 132 employer members. Over the year, our work with these employers benefitted over a million employees across the UK, who now have access to enhanced parental and carer provision and flexible ways of working. Our work in these areas has impacted on gender equality and contributes to employers' efforts to close the gender pay gap.
- We produced a new set of resources and toolkits particularly aimed at smaller employers who have less access to HR and diversity expertise in this field. And when COVID-19 hit, we expanded this suite of resources to include a free toolkit for managing remote teams.





Influencing policy

- Thanks in part to the work that Working Families has done in identifying and exposing the ‘fatherhood penalty’, on her final day as Prime Minister, Theresa May announced a wide-ranging consultation on the future of parental leave and pay. We worked across our civil society partnerships to come to a shared set of principles to underpin reform and surveyed both employers and parents about which changes would make the biggest difference.
- Our influencing work was instrumental in the Government’s December 2019 announcement that it will bring forward legislation to make ‘flexible working the default’ following commitments in the general election manifesto. A key priority for us will be for this commitment to be translated into practice in a way that unlocks the supply of flexible and part-time jobs and enables working parents to reach their potential at work.
- Just before the end of the financial year, we published a detailed report of the challenges facing parents during COVID-19. We urged the government to allow parents to be put on furlough if their childcare responsibilities prevented them from working, and to introduce a flexible furlough system where workers could work reduced hours—both of which the government implemented.

We look forward to building on what we achieved in 2019-2020, leading the way in helping parents, carers, and employers adapt to the new world of work that has emerged out of COVID-19.

Tim Oliver
Chairman,
Working Families

Jane van Zyl
Chief Executive,
Working Families

Fighting for working parents at the onset of COVID-19

“The queries we heard from parents raised deep concerns about the unwillingness of some employers to be flexible around working hours and priorities for parents following the government advice to work from home. This came to a crisis point once schools and nurseries closed on 20 March 2020.”

The sweeping public health safeguards introduced in March 2020 to limit the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic were necessary. But these safeguards—in particular, closing schools and childcare settings—brought a host of knock-on effects for working parents. At the end of March 2020, estimates indicated that one in seven UK workers could have had to make changes to their working arrangements to provide childcare.

A challenging time for working parents

As the government, employers, and families struggled to adapt to changes in real time, the number of people getting in touch with our Legal Advice Service quadrupled in comparison to previous months, almost overnight. Since the middle of March 2020, close to 100% of our queries were related to COVID-19. Over 36,000 people accessed our COVID-19 focused advice web pages since they were created, comprising 42% of all our website users in this period.

The queries we heard from parents raised deep concerns about the unwillingness of some employers to be flexible around working hours and priorities for parents following the government advice to work from home. This came to a crisis point once schools and nurseries closed on 20 March 2020. We heard distressing stories of parents being forced to take unpaid leave or losing their jobs, bringing economic uncertainty and hardship at the worst possible time.

Driving policy solutions

To illustrate these huge challenges faced by working parents, [we fast-tracked a report](#)—kindly funded by Matrix Chambers—detailing their experiences and offering policy recommendations. The report covered troubling trends we were seeing in a variety of areas: working from home, parents unable to work from home, reduced-hours working, redundancy, social security, statutory sick pay, pregnancy and maternity, gender inequality, and insecure work.

The impact of this report has already been realised with the Government’s implementation of two of our key policy recommendations after the report’s launch: allowing parents to be put on furlough if their childcare responsibilities prevented them from working, and creating a ‘flexible furlough’ system that allowed for reduced-hours work.



Weathering the storm



Below is a snapshot of some of the queries we received at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Emma got in touch because her employer refused to let her work from home since she is a single mum with young children and schools are closed—even though many of her colleagues were actively being encouraged to work from home. Her employer told her she had to take unpaid parental leave.
- Kenisha, a working mum, was asked by her employer to sign a piece of paper to reduce her hours and salary as a result of COVID-19. She was concerned this would represent a permanent change to her contract and unsure about what the implications would be for her family when the economic situation returned to normal.
- Aimee, a hairdresser, rang us when she was six weeks pregnant and in the most vulnerable category for COVID-19. She was told by her employer to stay at home without pay. She didn't know how she would be able to make ends meet.

Transforming family-friendly policies in the insurance sector

In 2019-2020, Working Families worked alongside our employer member, Zurich UK, to support them to introduce a ground-breaking family-friendly policy.

As a leading global insurer, Zurich has 4,500 members of staff in the UK working across more than ten locations. “Insurance hasn’t typically been a diverse environment, so over a number of years we’ve been working hard to change that,” said Emma Francis, Diversity and Inclusion Manager at Zurich UK. “We recognised that we were limiting our talent pool and there was a real risk by not embracing a diverse workforce and their needs.”

Putting families at the heart of the business

As part of wider development to embrace diversity and become a truly inclusive organisation, Zurich started a process to review its family-friendly policies.

Parents make up a large part of the company’s workforce and Zurich wanted to challenge the historic maternity and paternity policies within the organisation. Paid leave for parents fosters loyalty, can boost staff retention and performance, attract people to a company and reduce the stress and anxiety of working parents.

Zurich understands that every family is unique and that when staff start or extend their family it’s an important time in their lives. To reflect this, Working Families was instrumental in supporting the organisation to develop a new family-friendly framework.

In June 2019, we worked together on the design and implementation of the policy. We helped them to understand best practice and provide examples of the approaches they could take to build a fully inclusive and fair policy.

“We felt we were in a safe pair of hands with Working Families to help guide us to get it right,” said Carmen Coombs, People Experience Manager at Zurich UK. “They helped us over hurdles, gave us confidence and helped activate it in an inclusive way.”

Enhanced parental leave for everyone

Launched in September 2019, Zurich’s approach allows every parent to have the opportunity to spend quality time off with their new family from birth or adoption. The company gives the same amount of paid time off for employees regardless of gender, gender identity or sexual orientation.

The company’s enhanced elements of maternity, paternity and adoption policies are equal, with everyone entitled to 16 weeks full pay. If both parents work at the company, they are both entitled to the leave and can even take it at the same time.

“We felt we were in a safe pair of hands with Working Families to help guide us to get it right,” said Carmen Coombs, People Experience Manager at Zurich UK. “They helped us over hurdles, gave us confidence and helped activate it in an inclusive way.”

“We didn’t just look at maternity and paternity leave, we actually looked at other dimensions that complete the family picture,” explained Coombs. “It’s important for us to support our employees at life-changing times, such as becoming a parent, but also help them navigate through the difficult times as well.”

This means the company also offers additional leave for those whose babies are born prematurely, for parents going through IVF and also miscarriage support, bereavement and compassionate leave and flexibility for carers.

Improving staff engagement

Since introducing the new policy, the company’s staff engagement score has increased. Fathers and same sex parents have particularly benefitted from the newly introduced enhancements and the uptake has been very encouraging.

“We knew it would be a successful policy,” explains Coombs. “But we underestimated just how many of our male workforce would vocalise their gratitude – feedback has been phenomenal.”

Building a workforce for the future

Zurich’s family-friendly framework followed another innovative policy they introduced, which sees every job vacancy advertised as a potential part time, job share or full-time working opportunity. Working Families has long called for employers to advertise jobs as flexible by default to give applicants the confidence to ask for alternative patterns of work.

Advertisements use gender neutral language and just three months after the policy was introduced in March 2019, the business saw a 25% increase in the number of women applying for jobs across all levels. It has been particularly successful in senior management roles which have seen a 45% increase in females applying. This initiative has gone a long way in tackling the organisation’s gender pay gap.

Existing staff members also have the option to request to work on a part time, job share or FlexWork basis, which allows them to work where, when, and how they choose. Take up within the business is high, with almost three out of four (72%) employees benefitting.

“Time and time again staff tell us that family time, and the ability to be with family at important moments, whether it’s going to a school assembly or a hospital appointment, is incredibly valued,” said Francis.

A culture to be proud of

Zurich’s efforts to improve the lives of working parents has earned them a shortlisting in our Best Practice Awards in two categories: Best for Fathers and Best for Flexible Working, as well as a spot on our 2020 list of the Top 30 Employers for Working Families.

“Having that third-party validation for our policies from Working Families means a lot to us,” said Francis. “We’re in a place where we’re proud to talk about how we are really making a difference to the lives of our employees.”



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Tackling workplace discrimination

“I saw a position advertised with flexible options and decided to apply but not discuss the details until offer. I was offered and accepted the job but sadly—and shockingly—the employer withdrew the offer when they found out I had a disabled partner.”

Working Families’ award-winning Legal Advice Service provides free advice on employment rights to working people across the UK — a majority of whom are on a low income. In FY 2019-2020, Working Families’ e-mail and telephone helpline advised 1,940 people, giving them the support they needed to fight for their rights in the workplace. Below is a story from helpline user Sarah (name changed to protect anonymity), in her own words.

Like many people, the most important people in my life are my family.

I have two young children: one at school and one at nursery. And I have a partner who became suddenly and multiply disabled as the result of a stroke three years ago. He was in hospital for six months and overnight I felt like I became a single mother, the sole earner, and juggling all of this alongside my job.

I am a mother and a carer for a disabled partner. But I am also a policy and campaigns leader in the charity world with 20 years’ experience of campaigning for children and disability rights. I love my job and I am extremely proud of the work I have done so far in my career.

I’ve been working flexibly for six years now and while I am extremely grateful to have an employer that has allowed me to do this. I know that they have also benefited from the arrangements we have. I am a committed, hard-working, and conscientious employee who would simply not be able to work if they didn’t allow me the flexibility I need.

As I work part-time and with a flexible pattern, I am able to go with my partner to his hospital and therapy appointments, see the kids in their music assemblies, and go to parents’ meetings. I am able to support my partner in his rehabilitation, whilst also leading a brilliant team at work.

So how did I come across Working Families? Well, I have been with my current organisation for 11 years now. I’ve learnt a lot and progressed immensely in my knowledge, experience, and leadership skills. I would like to take the next step in my career. And the challenge for me has been getting the opportunity to both advance my career and to continue to work flexibly. Sadly, there are too many employers out there who just haven’t got the same sense as my current employer.

I started to apply for positions in new organisations and this is when the problems began. When should I ask about flexible working? If I asked too early, I felt like I was presenting ‘problems’ before I’d even had a chance to talk about what I could offer.



If I asked too late, it felt like a waste of everyone's time if flexibility was not an option. Should I mention that my partner has disabilities and that I need flexibility to support him? I saw a position advertised with flexible options and decided to apply but not discuss the details until offer. I was offered and accepted the job but sadly—and shockingly—the employer withdrew the offer when they found out I had a disabled partner.

I was gutted. And fed up. I wanted to just forget it and move on. But I felt a responsibility to stop this happening over and over.

This is where Working Families came in and they were amazing. I called their helpline and from that point onwards they were there to help me with every step. Helping me to be brave. And helping me to say the right things. And challenge the issue head on.

Although I am a strong individual who has a career in tackling injustice, when it was my turn to call out injustice to people that I might one day work with again, and to people that might jeopardising my career prospects, it wasn't easy.

The team at Working Families supported me practically and emotionally, and they helped me get a good result: not only did I receive a settlement agreement, but the employer also agreed to review its flexible working policies so that they are in line with industry best practice and to provide equality, diversity, and flexible working training to staff.

I am extremely fortunate to still have a fantastic, well-paid job that I love. Change is coming and I know that one day soon, I will find a new challenge for my career that will still allow me to be there for my family. To drive this change, we need organisations like Working Families to continue to support parents and carers who are treated unfairly in the workplace, to help employers shift to more flexible and family-friendly cultures, and to hold the government accountable for creating policies that benefit people with caring responsibilities.

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Support from Trusts and Foundations

Our achievements in 2019-2020 would not have been possible without the generosity of the following trusts and foundations:

29th May 1961 Charitable Trust

Allen & Overy Foundation

Capital Group

Eleanor Rathbone Charitable Trust

Garfield Weston Foundation

Gowling Charitable Trust

London Legal Support Trust

Mactaggart Family Trusts

Matrix Chambers

Philip King Trust

Richard Benjamin Trust

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For more information on our work and mission, please visit

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