

Family Friendly Workplaces Education Session Series

At the first of our series of sessions designed to give employers, policymakers and advocates of inclusive practices a better understanding of our new certification partnership, we were joined by Jenn Barnett from Grant Thornton and Daniel Chan from QBE, two of our supporting partners, to drill down into why they became certified, and what to expect from the process.

Why become a Family Inclusive Workplace

Thriving employees leads to thriving business

- Creating an environment that supports employees to manage day-to-day pressures and at key moments that matter results in enhanced productivity, reduced absenteeism and lower staff turnover and costly recruitment.
 - 36% of employers who participated in the Working Families Benchmark survey reported lower staff turnover as a direct benefit of flexible working.
 - A UNISON survey found that sickness rates reduced from 12% to 2% amongst those that worked flexibly.

Stand out for the right reasons

- Appealing to the best talent is the key to a resilient future. Having the Family Friendly Workplaces logo makes it possible for talent, and prospective clients, to easily identify organisations that care about their people.

A commitment to meaningful change

- Socially responsible businesses see that workplaces can contribute to the solutions for some of society's challenges, such as a gender inequality, a stretched NHS and care system, aging population and cost-of-living crisis, with policies that empower employees to navigate caring responsibilities and support wellbeing.
 - A 2020 Wildgoose study found that 39% of people working flexibly saw a noticeable improvement in their mental health and reduced stress.

- Because women's equal participation in the workforce contributes to the economy, advancing women's equality could add \$12 trillion to the global economy.

A catalyst for gender equality

- Organisations dedicated to closing the gender pay gap should be using family-friendly policies and practices as an effective tool to address caregiving bias and expand part-time progression.
 - Analysis by the Centre for Progressive Policy found that across OECD countries, the introduction of more than six weeks' paid paternity leave led to a 4% reduction in the gender pay gap.
 - Five years on from adding flexible options on all job adverts, the number of women in senior positions at Zurich has doubled and part-time promotions have increased by 167% in the past two years.

Going through the certification process

Getting leaders on board

- Engage in listening wherever possible. Collect opinions and data through pulse surveys, or hold focus groups where leaders can hear directly from parents and carers.
- Bring the change needed to life, with real-life stories, giving employee and manager perspectives if possible.
- Engage a board sponsor to be a persuasive voice.
- Make the most of partnerships, such as Working Families membership, to get benchmarking information, and benefit from an independent voice that has experience and evidence.
- Start small. A pilot on a small scale can be a low-cost, low-risk way to build a business case.
- Data builds trust so use research where possible to justify changes.
- Look at the organisation's agendas and make the case how family-friendly working can advance each of those.

What to expect

- There's support every step of the way. The certification process is simple and straightforward, with a Relationship Manager there to explain reports and offer clear guidance to ease the journey.

- No-one expects perfect. The certification is designed to give an understanding of what the organisation is getting right, and the process is incremental, with a realistic target of two-years to achieve agreed actions.
- It's not a box-ticking exercise. The Family Friendly Workplaces process requires a mindset that is dedicated to improvement and, with action plans requiring sign-off from senior leaders, accountability is baked in.

Building a better culture long-term

- Understand the organisation's unique business challenges and then get into the detail. For example, look at roles individually to assess what type of flex would work.
- Start with a yes. Shift the organisation's mindset to automatically agree to flexible working requests, unless there is a business reason not to.
- Be open to constantly evolving by listening to what's working or not.
- Ask what microaggressions people are facing and act to address these through training and myth-busting.