

Working Families

To identify relevant information we have talked with our Employer Services team here at Working Families. They deal directly with employers, and work with them on policy and practice issues that include reducing inequality. I have also looked at the research projects with which we are involved and other sources, to see what policy and practices may have been transformative. My apologies in advance if these duplicate information that you already have.

- Our employer work shows that some have enhanced Shared Parental leave to drive take up, offering higher levels of pay and increased flexibility in how leave is taken. However, these activities are relatively recent and no evidence has yet emerged in a consistent way that they are affecting gender equality. However, employers do anticipate that it will have an impact in the future, and some are positioning better shared parental leave provision as a way of tackling gender inequality.
- Working Families was part of a working group at EIGE that identified good practices promoting gender equality across the EU. We focussed on practices within the STEM sector, and more information is here <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/good-practices?topic%5b%5d=1600>
- Our own Modern Families Index 2019, an annual survey of 2750 parents, found that around a third of couple households said that they shared childcare between them equally (one measure of gender equality). Although we were not able to examine their employment circumstances directly or understand which policies and practices they might have used, we found that they were more likely to make use of flexible working, and have an employer where use of flexibility was culturally acceptable.
- With Manchester University Working Families examined the characteristics of fathers who were involved in their children's upbringing. We found that flexibility in working time arrangements for the father when their child was young predicted greater parental involvement (and potentially more gender equal parenting). Creating the conditions for the father to take paternity and parental leave is pivotal, as are fostering working hours for men which are more compatible with family life. Progress towards this goal is more likely to be made in the UK if parental leave entitlements for fathers are improved beyond the current limited provision available through the SPL policy, more effective implementation of the 'right to request' flexible working in workplaces for men as well as women, and measures to reduce the long full-time working hours which characterise many of the jobs and workplaces that men are employed in. Our research found that fathers are more likely to be involved in childcare when the mother is employed full-time. In the UK, mothers are more likely to be employed full-time both nine months and three years after childbirth if they had a higher occupational position prior to the birth, the likelihood of which is greater for the highly qualified. Hence measures to enable all women to make a smooth resumption of employment after childbirth are conducive to a more gender equal parenting arrangement. Good quality, affordable and flexible childcare is critically important. This research is here: <http://blog.policy.manchester.ac.uk/posts/2017/02/what-makes-dads-involved-in-childcare/>