

CASE STUDY

1. TACKLING UNEQUITABLE ACCESS TO CARE POLICIES

Aviva introduced equalised parental leave (where people of all genders are granted 52 weeks off upon the birth of a child, 26 of which are at full pay) almost four years ago. Anthony Fitzpatrick, Head of Colleague Experience and Employment Policy, explains how it was done.

A range of things sparked our decision to take this step: we felt employer policies were increasingly out of step with family lives and that our approach should reflect our values. We also saw the opportunity to 'de gender' care as good not only for women's careers, but also men who we wanted to support to play a greater role in their children's lives. Finally, we also felt it would send a strong signal about the kind of business we are – showing customers and employees that as an organisation, we believe in supporting our people of all genders to manage paid work with raising families.

From the outset we decided it needed to be simple and clear; a lot of policies around parental leave can be quite complex to understand. We also took a very deliberate approach to showcasing the new policy as part of a wider cultural transformation journey, enlisting senior leaders led by our CEO to promote our new approach. We continue to

profile people across the business taking the leave; and when employees return, we ask them to become advocates of the policy.

We now see roughly 1,200 people accessing the policy each year, with an equal number of men and women, and a good spread across the grades. Men are less likely to take the full year, but similar rates access the paid 6.5 half months.

It has been a great success with a positive impact on employee well-being and retention; we have had good feedback around staff feeling supported and encouraged to take time out. Even beyond the immediate people that use the policy, we believe it's impacted on wider staff morale and motivation; colleagues know they work for a company that's committed to helping employees balance all the different bits of their lives. It's also likely to have impacted on our recruitment costs.

The policy obviously has a price tag, but we would encourage all employers to think about the steps they can take to 'de gender care', helping families in the here and now and the case of gender equality in the long term. This kind of approach can also lower costs around recruitment as people are more likely to stay with a business that recognises their needs at different life stages.

TESTIMONIAL: Daniel Clark-Bland is based in York and took parental leave in 2019 to adopt his son Theo. He has worked for Aviva since 2018. I returned from parental leave in April 2020, by which time we were in lockdown, so I



haven't been back to the office since July 2019. It was quite bumpy coming back to work. I had the usual post-paternity leave 'bump', but also a pandemic 'bump'. Our childcare arrangements weren't in place due to lockdown, so my husband and I had to adjust to working with Theo at home. It was a triple whammy. There is an inherent guilt that parents don't talk about – that you're being a bit rubbish both at work and at home.

Aviva and my leader were exceptionally supportive; we arranged a working pattern that meant I could be a decent employee and dad. I worked mornings and my husband worked afternoons. Not many people I know outside of Aviva have had the same beneficial setup. Routine is key for adopted children. By the time Theo was with us, we were his third family, after his birth family and foster family. You must do so much to offer comfortable, predictable environments. Being creative and having a 'catalogue' of go-to ideas really helped us. I can't recommend enough a good pair of walking shoes and a rear steer tricycle. It is so important to be kind to yourself, as a parent and as a person. Some days, you just want to sit and listen to music while playing with toy cars on the floor. Becoming a parent made me feel immensely proud to work for Aviva. I am really grateful that my employer supported us through the many steps of adoption. There are months of meetings with social workers, a private medical appointment and two panel approvals, which all need to be made in person. Being able to attend these took a level of stress out of what was already a strenuous and emotional journey. I have not spoken to a single other person who hasn't said 'wow, they let you take how much leave?' It is so important as an adoptive family – we were two strangers who swept in and had to build a real bond and rapport. Would that have

been there after two weeks of statutory leave? How would we have made the call on which dad took the much longer adoption leave, potentially bonding more with Theo? Thanks to equal parental leave, we never had to make this unspeakably cruel decision.

2. EQUALISING PARENTAL LEAVE

In November 2019, **Bain & Company** became one of an elite few organisations to offer equal parental leave for men and women. New parents – regardless of gender, or how they became parents – are eligible to receive up to 52 weeks of leave with the first 29 weeks fully paid. This case study outlines how they did it, and key lessons learned on the journey.

The conversation on equalising parental leave at Bain & Co started in early 2019 with a review of their maternity policy, reflecting a desire to offer the best support they could at key life stages "Only talking about maternity felt like the wrong thing" reflects Helen Walker, EMEA Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion Director. Despite setting a target to get to parity within their client facing team (with their non-client facing team already 75% female), Bain's Gender Pay Gap data remained higher than they would like, driven by a low representation of women at the top of the firm.

Internal analysis showed that the biggest driver of their Gender Pay Gap was in recruiting, which drove the firm to mobilise an effort which has resulted in greater than 50% of female hires across all levels. Once recruited, the analysis showed parity in retention rates between men

and women, and near parity in promotion rate – except for time taken out for maternity leave.

Furthermore, the main beneficiaries for this policy given life stage – the firm's project leaders (Senior Managers / Associate Partners), were a growth constraint for the business. Retention of this population was critical for Bain & Co with employees at this level taking significant time and investment to develop and being expensive to replace.

Further analysis showed the value of this policy as a retention tool. For every few employees retained because of the policy, this was sufficient to cover the capacity gap (when colleagues were taking leave) and costs (relative to hiring new people into the business). "Thinking about this in terms of retention was critical for us" said Matt Trebilco, VP, Business Planning & Analysis. By phasing the policy in the two-year period, from 13 weeks in 2020 to 29 weeks in 2021, this ensured the impact of retention came before the majority of impact on capacity.

Engaging senior stakeholders

The working group driving this effort worked hard to build supportive leaders when scoping and testing the policy, the majority of whom became huge advocates for change. There was a desire to do something bold and ambitious, capitalise on the power of being first amongst peers, and with several clients announcing similar policies, a sense of momentum was created. Introducing equalised parental leave also aligned with Bain & Co's broader talent philosophy – of 'being there' at critical moments in employees' lives, making a visible commitment to support family life and equalise caring responsibilities and making a high-profile

commitment to DE&I, a strategic imperative for the business and its people.

Outcome

Following the launch of the equal parental leave policy, the organisation saw a 100% take-up in the phasing year (2020) and similar levels of engagement to date. The announcement of the policy was incredibly impactful and very positively received by employees. "I had one woman who came up to me in tears to say it was the proudest she had ever felt of an employer in fifteen years of a professional career" shared Chief Talent Officer, Barney Hamilton.

To assist in the introduction of the policy globally, the team also created materials and a business case model that other offices could use to assess impact of introducing equal parental leave, with Bain Germany and Switzerland taking the same bold step this year.

CASE STUDY: Matt Trebilco, VP Business Planning and Analysis

Being able to take extended paternity leave has had an enormously positive impact on me and my family. Our daughter was born in April 2020, and my wife spent 7 months at home looking after her. Being able to hand over daily parenting responsibilities to me meant she felt ready and able to go back to work in November, which was good timing for her from a career perspective. She also valued being able to focus on her transition back to work without the additional pressure of settling our daughter into childcare at the same time. For me – having the paid leave took all financial considerations away and made this a very easy decision. I built a wonderful relationship with my daughter (at a really fun stage of her development) and felt recharged coming back

to work. Crucially it's enabled us to create an effective sharing of parental responsibilities now we are both back at work full time.

3. PAID CARERS LEAVE

Centrica is one of the few large organisations with a signature policy of a month's carers leave, where annual leave will be matched by the company to support time out to care, and strong senior leadership backing.

With an ageing UK population and rising retirement ages, more people will need to both work and care for longer than ever before. As a responsible employer, Centrica recognise that it's crucial to do all they can to adapt to these changing demographics. Centrica's Carers' Leave Policy allows individuals to match their annual leave entitlement with Paid Carers' Leave of up to 30 days. They allow individuals the right to request flexible working from day one, which they think is an important provision for carers to be able to balance work with caring responsibilities.

Centrica is fully committed to supporting their colleagues with caring responsibilities. Their aim is to help their employees both meet their caring commitments and maintain an active career. They do this by allowing employees to manage their annual leave, work and care responsibilities in a way that works for them.

On average, Centrica employees with caring responsibilities take just over three days of 'paid, matched carers leave' each year; therefore we estimate the planned cost of carers leave to be £615,400.

Centrica also has a 1,000 strong Carers Employee Network, which can demonstrate tangible outcomes on engagement and productivity for the people it supports. The Carers Employee Network signposts carers to support and puts carers in touch with other individuals with similar caring circumstances to share their stories and support one another. The network itself is a source of support for people, some of whom may have a short-term care crisis; others of whom spend years balancing work with heavy duty care for someone they love.

Centrica recognises that support is so important, they know carers can quite easily forget to care for themselves. Therefore outside of network activity and policy, they encourage their employees to utilise wider support services such as our regional Mental Health First Aiders, in which there are 200 globally. Our #KeepTalking campaign was implemented to promote conversations and increase the comfortability around mental and physical disabilities within the workplace.

"There is a clear business case for ensuring that our people can juggle work and care – and do so in a way that works for them. Our overarching commitment is to enable all employees to bring their whole selves to work irrespective of background or circumstance. We continue to capture rich data via our annual count me in campaign, to enable further improvements to our policies, practices, and support services. We want all employees to feel supported, attain their full potential and ultimately in doing so heighten business performance," says Simi Dubb, Consumer Capability Director and Global Head of Diversity & Inclusion.

4. TIME OUT POLICY

Deloitte's Time Out scheme enables all employees to achieve a better balance between career and personal commitments.

The Equal Lives research in partnership with Santander UK, has shown that 84% of men think that employers should support them with their caring responsibilities for adults or children, but only 43% believe that their employer does this. We are calling on employers to review their policies to better support men. Some organisations have already implemented policies and schemes to support all of their employees.

One example is, Deloitte's Time Out scheme, which enables employees to take a four-week block of unpaid leave in addition to their holiday entitlement to achieve a better balance between their career and personal commitments. Time Out can be taken every year, at a time which suits both the individual and the business. Although it is unpaid, benefit allowances are ongoing during these periods of leave. Introduced in 2014, Time Out has proved popular across the organisation – with over 700 employees so far benefitting from the initiative.

Watch the [video](#) to find out more about how the scheme benefits fathers and carers.