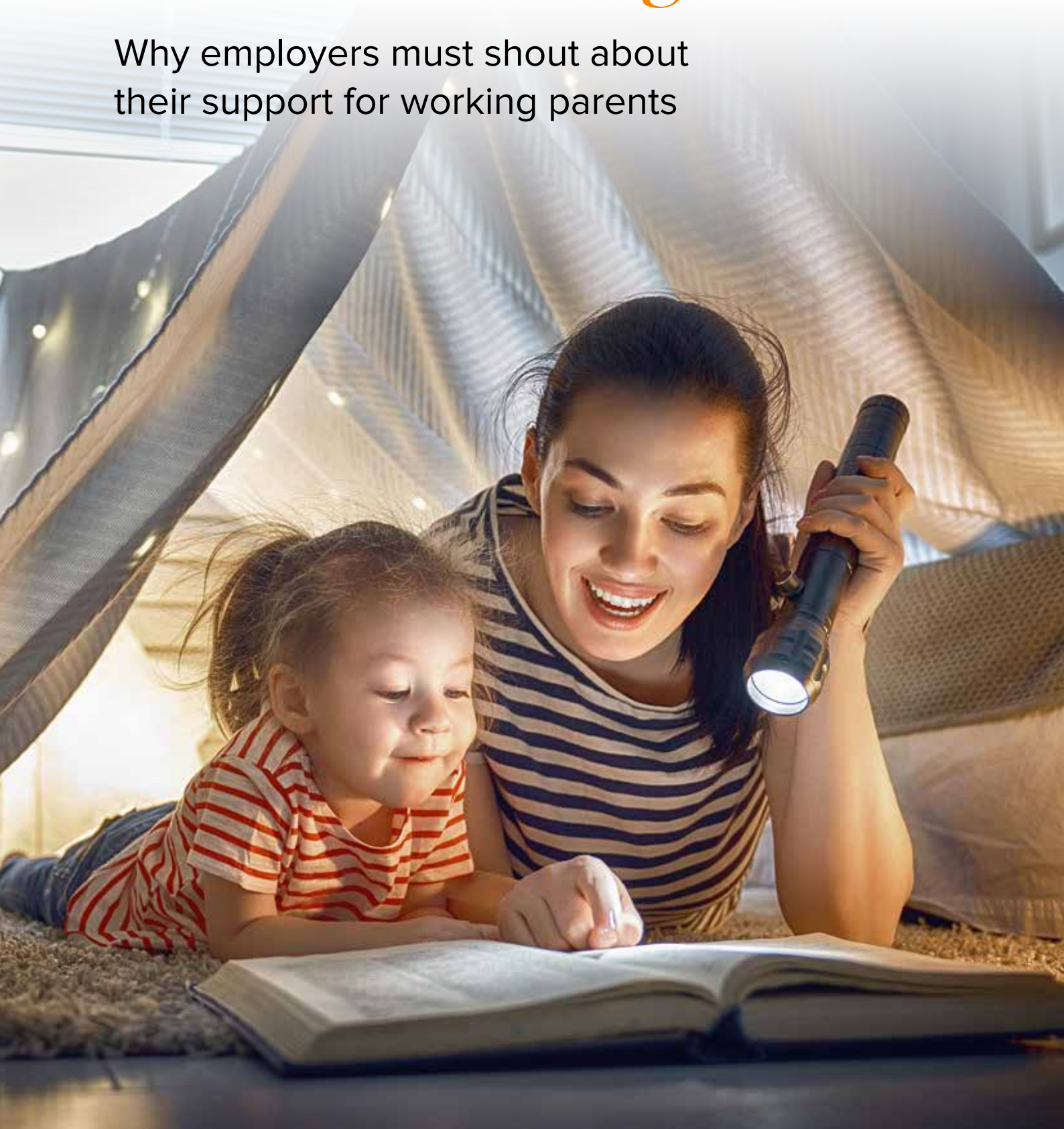




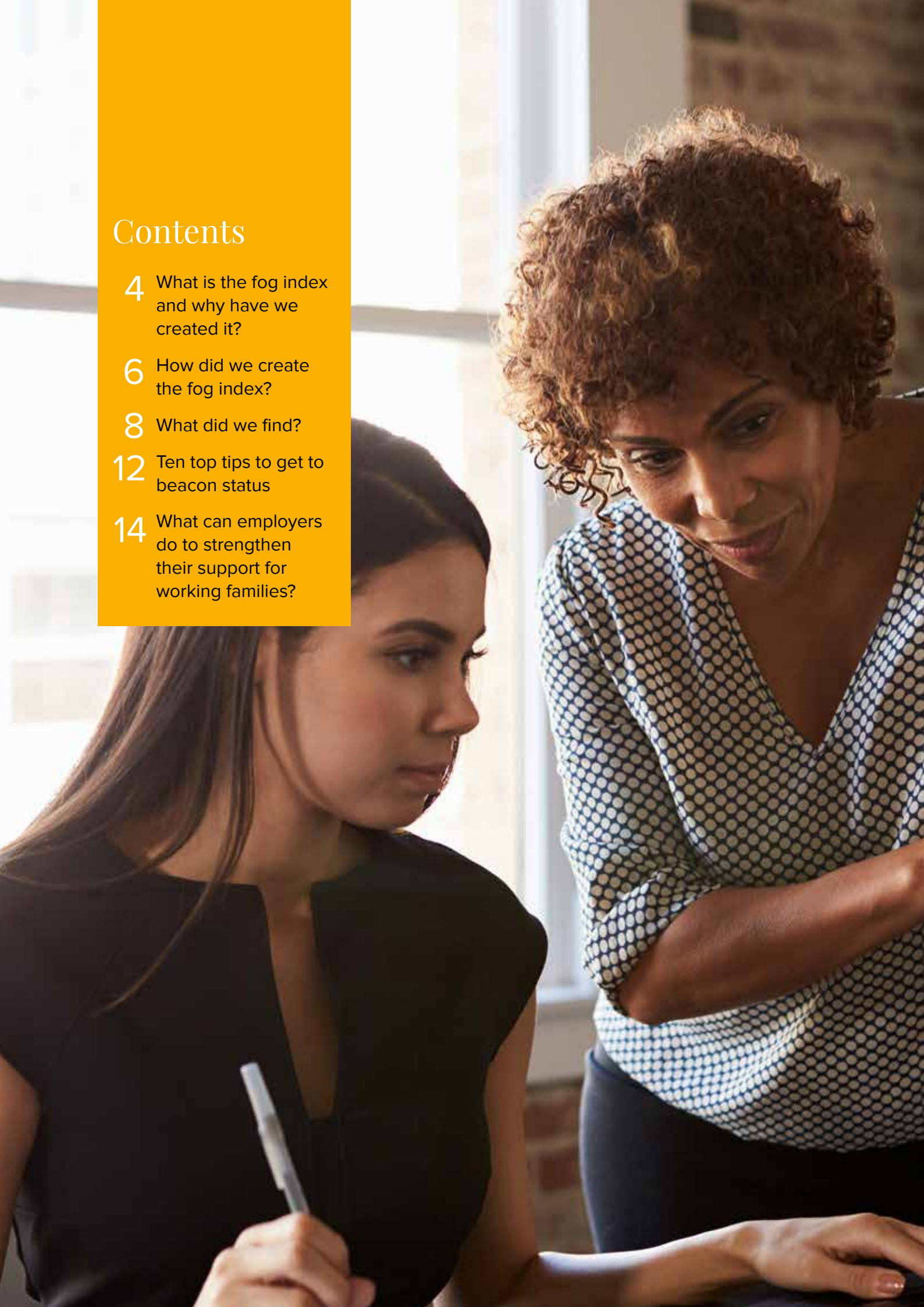
The Parental Fog Index

Why employers must shout about their support for working parents



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Executive summary

It's been a record-breaking year for working parents. For the first time there are more women with dependent children in the UK workforce than those without. More families than ever before have both parents working full time.*

The traditional family arrangement of dad as breadwinner and mum as caregiver is long gone. We are seeing a growing trend of both parents working full time and that looks set to become the norm.

Family set-ups where both parents work may ease the rising cost of raising a family but it also puts family life under strain. Parents we coach tell us that long hours at work frequently get in the way of spending time with their children, their relationship with their partner, and attempts to eat a healthy diet and exercise.

Although many employers have introduced initiatives to help parents manage work and family responsibilities these are not working as effectively as they might. Some have the unintended consequence of stymying pay and career progression for women. As a result, women's careers are flat-lining at a time when the UK has more mothers than ever before in full time work.

We know that for many working mums their career choices are inextricably linked to their partner's ability to share work and care responsibilities. We also know that in the future the number of working parents will grow. Yet few employers appear to talk directly to the needs of this demographic. A large chunk of the working population deals with predictable pressures from work and home on a daily basis, and employers appear to be leaving them to get on with it.

I believe that by taking time to understand the unique needs of working parents, not just in the early years but throughout the ever-changing stages of parenthood, an employer can develop a more effective approach to attract, retain and develop over half their workforce.

The Parental Leave and Pay Arrangements Bill, which is working its way through parliament, will ultimately require employers with 250 plus employees to publish details of their parental benefits. This means prospective and current employees will be able to compare and contrast support by employer. Ten organisations have already taken the lead and published these details on a voluntary basis.

We researched the websites of The Times Top 100 Graduate Employers, curious to find out how many meet publication requirements. We are sharing what we found in this report to encourage discussion among employers on how they might better support working parents ahead of publication day.

We know that many of our clients provide more support for working parents than appears on their website. For them this report is a call to action on the question of transparency.



Geraldine Gallacher
Managing Director,
Executive Coaching
Consultancy

(*ONS, *Families and the Labour Market*, 2018.)

1 What is the fog index and why have we created it?

We've reviewed the websites of organisations on The Times Top 100 Graduate Employers, as these employers are known for marketing their employer brand competitively to prospective employees.

We looked for evidence that they also understand and support the needs of working parents. We assigned a visibility rating to rank each website by transparency. This information should be of interest to large employers who will be required by law to publish details of the parental policies they offer.

What is the Parental Leave and Pay Arrangements (publication) Bill?

The UK government has announced a plan for companies with 250 plus staff to publish an annual statement of their employees' entitlement to parental leave including, statutory pay and any pay and benefits they'd get while on parental leave.

An employer will have to set out how they support working parents, fathers and mothers, over and above statutory requirements including any flexible working arrangements.

Any changes an employer makes to their family-related benefits must be reported too. Upgrades are likely to enhance an employer's reputation while downgrades pose a risk.

Reporting requirements will be similar to the annual gender pay gap report. A board member selected from an approved list will be required to sign the statement before returning it to the government for publication. This will ensure the issue is discussed at board level.

What problems are these new measures aiming to solve?

Ministers hope the bill will bring transparency to what employers are doing to support working parents. Employers will be able to learn from each other and understand what initiatives are working, and why, and think about this support as a core component of their talent management strategy.

At present candidates often apply for jobs and interview with the terms of parental leave invisible to them. Most candidates say they wouldn't ask for this information at interview stage for fear that doing so will raise questions about their commitment to their career. Stating details including pay and duration of parental benefits on an employer's website makes the recruitment process fairer for men and women.

The number of women with dependent children in the UK workforce has outstripped those without and there are now more families with both parents working full time. It is clear from the strain experienced by working parents that they need more effective support.

Flexible working has proved an effective way to keep women with dependent children in the workforce but ineffectual to progress their pay and career. Rather than return to the career they had pre-children the majority are side stepping into part time or flexible roles and seeing their careers flat line as a result. This presents a challenge for employers trying to close their gender pay gap.

Statutory Shared Parental Leave, the government's flagship policy to encourage fathers to share work and childcare responsibilities more equally with their partner has failed to take off. Low take-up is believed to be down to a lack of awareness of the policy among fathers-to-be and most employers only offering statutory paternity pay.

Men say they want to do more childcare but don't request flexible or part time working for fear of attracting the same penalties they see women's careers suffer from.

Publishing will create win-win outcomes for employer and employee

It will be easier for employers to benchmark their family-friendly benefits against competitors. A strong offering can be used as a differentiating factor to attract and retain talent.

Applicants can see what benefits a potential employer offers without having to ask these questions during an interview.

Publishing Pioneers

These firms participated in a voluntary scheme and have published ahead of the deadline:

- Management Consultancies: Deloitte, KPMG, EY, PwC
- Law firms: Addleshaw Goddard, Linklaters
- Banks: RBS, Santander.

A window to get ahead and review your offering away from public scrutiny

While the bill is working its way through parliament, employers have the opportunity to review their support for working parents without the pressure of public scrutiny.

We've created the fog index to kick-start that process. Our intention is not to name and shame employers but rather to highlight examples of good practice and encourage discussion.



2 How did we create the fog index?



We replicated the experience of a prospective job applicant searching an employer website for information on the support it offers to working parents. We used the Times top 100 graduate employers list as our research sample.

To ensure consistency, we used a researcher with no prior knowledge of what specific employers do to support working parents. We asked them to search each website using the following terms:

- Talks about commitment to working parents
- Awards – e.g. best / top employer for parents or women
- Shared Parental leave policy
- Maternity leave policy
- Paternity leave policy
- Flexible working
- Shared Parental leave policy – with pay and duration
- Maternity leave policy – with pay and duration
- Paternity leave policy – with pay and duration
- Flexible working – policy
- Show case support – written / video / podcast
- Role model testimonies
- Reference to tracking pay and career progress of flexible workers

Scoring

Each found term scored 1 point. We totted up the scores and allocated a visibility rating as follows:

Score	Visibility rating
12-13	Beacon
8 -11	Fully Visible
4 -7	Visible
1-3	Foggy
0	Invisible

We define each visibility rating as:

Label	Descriptor
<p>Beacon</p>	<p>Support for working parents runs through this company's DNA.</p> <p>Evidence – meets full visibility criteria plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Website showcases support with case studies that demonstrate policy in action. This may include written, video or podcast content. ● Role model testimonies ● Employer tracks pay and career progress of flexible workers
<p>Full visibility</p>	<p>This company publishes full details of policies that support working parents on its website including terms of pay and duration of leave.</p> <p>Evidence – meets visible criteria plus:</p> <p>Polices published include details of pay and duration of leave.</p>
<p>Visible</p>	<p>This company publishes policies that support working parents but these policies do not include terms of pay or duration.</p> <p>Evidence – meets foggy criteria plus:</p> <p>Policies published:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Shared Parental Leave ● Maternity ● Paternity ● Adoption ● Flexible working.
<p>Foggy</p>	<p>You get the sense this company is supporting working parents but can't see the detail of how it does. This company references support for working parents e.g. blogs, relevant awards but does not publish policies.</p> <p>Evidence:</p> <p>Refers to commitment to working parents in general terms i.e. "a generous maternity package", enters best employer awards but does not publish policies on website.</p>
<p>Invisible</p>	<p>No reference to support for working parents</p>

3 What did we find?

a) Employer visibility rating

Rating	Total	Employers in alphabetical order	
Beacon	4	<p>Accenture – accounting and professional services</p> <p>Civil Service – public sector</p>	<p>EY – accounting and professional services</p> <p>PwC – accounting and professional services</p>
Fully visible	14	<p>Army – public sector</p> <p>Cancer Research – charity</p> <p>Deloitte – accounting and professional services</p> <p>Grant Thornton – accounting and professional services</p> <p>Irwin Mitchell – law</p> <p>Johnson & Johnson – consumer goods</p>	<p>KPMG – accounting and professional services</p> <p>Linklaters – law</p> <p>NGDP for Local Government – public sector</p> <p>NHS – public sector</p> <p>RAF – public sector</p> <p>RBS – banking and finance</p> <p>Santander – banking and finance</p> <p>Shell – oil and energy</p>
Visible	36	<p>Allen & Overy – law</p> <p>Amazon – retail</p> <p>Atkins – engineering and industrial</p> <p>BAE Systems – engineering and industrial</p> <p>Bain & company – consulting</p> <p>Barclays – banking and finance</p> <p>BlackRock – banking and finance</p> <p>BMW Group – engineering and industrial</p> <p>Boston Consulting Group – consulting</p> <p>BT – IT and telecommunications</p> <p>CMS – law</p> <p>Deutsche Bank – banking and finance</p> <p>DLA Piper – law</p> <p>Goldman Sachs – investment banking</p> <p>Google – IT and telecommunications</p> <p>Hogan Lovells – law</p> <p>HSBC – banking and finance</p>	<p>Jaguar Land Rover – engineering and industrial</p> <p>John Lewis Partnership – retail</p> <p>JP Morgan – investment banking</p> <p>L’Oreal – consumer goods</p> <p>Mars – consumer goods</p> <p>McKinsey & Company – consulting</p> <p>MIS – Security services – public sector</p> <p>Microsoft – IT and telecommunications</p> <p>P&G – consumer goods</p> <p>Police Now – public sector</p> <p>Royal Navy – public sector</p> <p>Savills – property</p> <p>Siemens – engineering and industrial</p> <p>Sky – media</p> <p>Slaughter & May – law</p> <p>Teach First – public sector</p> <p>Unilever – consumer goods</p> <p>Wellcome – charity</p> <p>WPP – media</p>



Rating	Total	Employers in alphabetical order
Foggy	15	<p>Aldi – retail</p> <p>Apple – consumer goods</p> <p>Bank of England – public sector</p> <p>BBC – media</p> <p>BP – oil and energy</p> <p>Danone – consumer goods</p> <p>ExxonMobil – oil and energy</p> <p>Herbert Smith Freehills – law</p> <p>Lloyds – banking and finance</p> <p>Lloyds banking group – banking and finance</p> <p>M&S – retail</p> <p>Nestle – consumer goods</p> <p>Network Rail – transport</p> <p>Tesco – retail</p> <p>White & Case – law</p>
Invisible	31	<p>ASOS – retail</p> <p>AECOM – engineering and industrial</p> <p>Airbus – engineering and industrial</p> <p>Aon – banking and finance</p> <p>Arup – engineering and industrial</p> <p>AstraZeneca – chemicals and pharmaceuticals</p> <p>Baker & McKenzie – law</p> <p>Bloomberg – banking and finance</p> <p>Boots – retail</p> <p>British Airways – transport</p> <p>Charity Works – charity</p> <p>Citi – investment banking and fund management</p> <p>Clifford Chance – law</p> <p>Dyson – consumer goods</p> <p>Facebook – technology</p> <p>Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer – law</p> <p>Frontline – public sector</p> <p>GSK – chemicals and pharmaceuticals</p> <p>IBM – IT and telecommunications</p> <p>Lidl – retail</p> <p>McDonalds Restaurants – retail</p> <p>Mondelez International – consumer goods</p> <p>Morgan Stanley – investment banking</p> <p>Newton – consulting</p> <p>Penguin Random House – media</p> <p>Pfizer – chemicals and pharmaceuticals</p> <p>Pinsent Masons – law</p> <p>Rolls Royce – engineering and industrial</p> <p>Think Ahead – public sector</p> <p>TPP – IT and telecommunications</p> <p>Virgin Media – media</p>



b) How many websites would comply with the Publication Act?

Compliant	Non-compliant
18	82

The majority of employers ranked “visible” would increase their ranking to “highly visible” by publishing specific details of parental benefits such as pay and duration.

c) Breakdown of referenced parental policies

Policy	Referenced but no detail	Includes details e.g pay and duration
Shared Parental Leave	49	24
Maternity leave	52	23
Paternity leave	50	22
Flexible work	60	13

Low take up of Shared Parental Leave (ShPL) has been attributed in part to poor publicity. Our research found that just over half the websites we searched did not contain a single reference to ShPL. If a job applicant wished to know these details they would have to ask at the interview stage.

Men also say statutory Shared Parental Leave is not financially viable. Employers offering enhanced financial support for ShPL are in the minority and can use details of their offer to differentiate themselves from competitors.

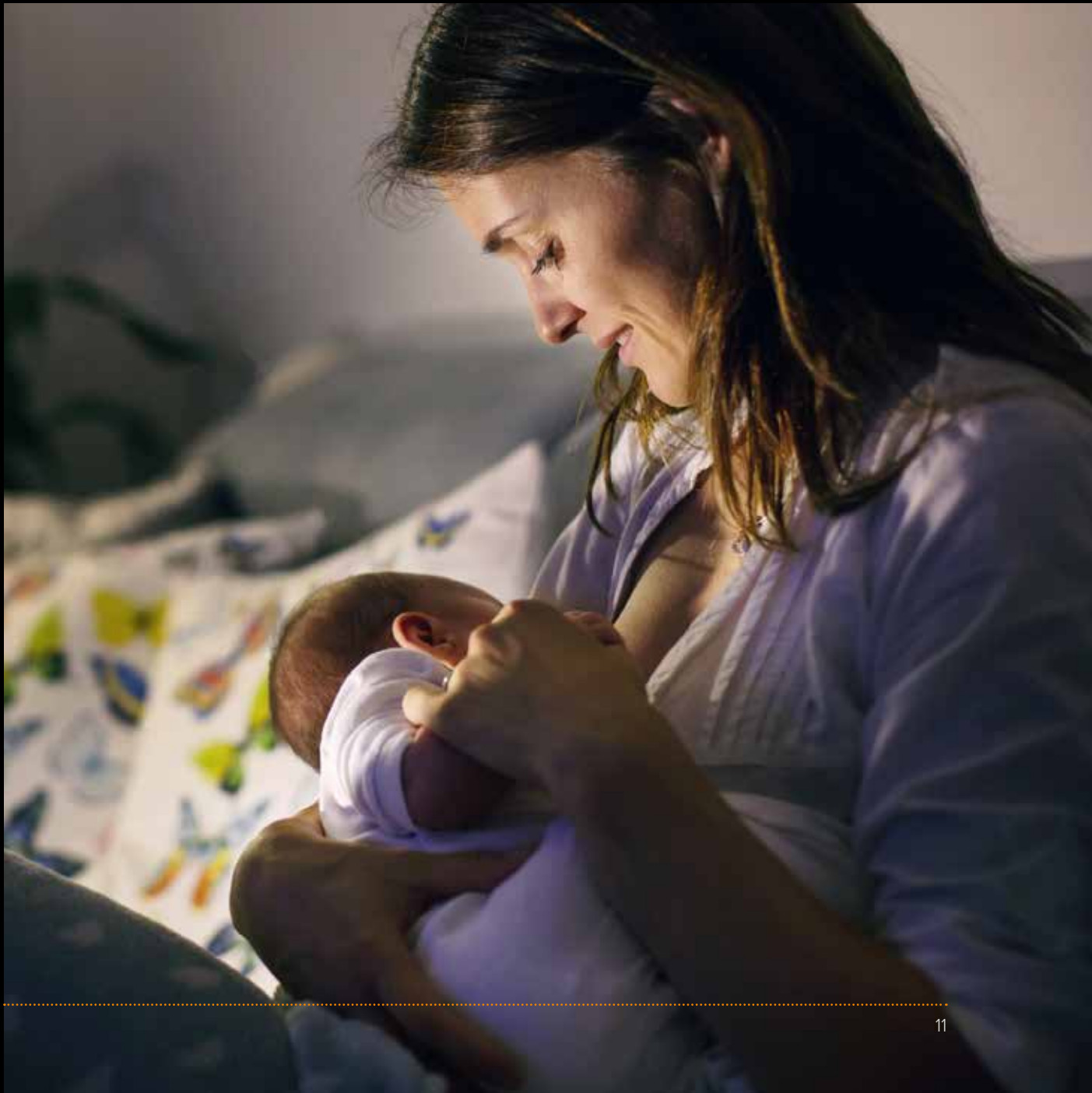
d) Evidencing a culture of support

Policies are more likely to be effective if they operate in a supportive culture. Higher scoring websites tend to include testimony from staff in video or blog format explaining how the culture helps them manage work and care responsibilities. Only two employers made explicit reference to tracking the pay and progress of flexible workers.

A third of websites (29) displayed badges of awards won for family / women friendly awards. Very few explain specifically the initiative which won the award and the difference it has made to staff. This is a missed opportunity to market their family-friendly credentials.

e) Industry observations

Sample size and uneven representation of industries make it hard to make any meaningful observations about industry groups. Almost half of women in the workforce work in public administration, education or health sectors. This is in part due to the perceived higher flexibility and family friendly policies of these sectors. It's interesting to observe STEM, engineering and construction employers in the lower rankings despite their efforts to increase gender diversity.



4 Ten top tips to get to beacon status

1 Review beacon websites

All talk directly to working parents as a discrete audience, showing they understand and support their need to manage work with care responsibilities.

2 Join up external communications

HR and D&I teams need to have a clear rationale and narrative for supporting working parents which is then clearly communicated via their website. PwC does this particularly well with a separate section under experienced hires dedicated to working parents.

3 Communicate your support as part of your employer brand

It would be surprising if many employers that ranked lower on the fog index don't have highly competitive propositions for parents and so it's worth using all opportunities to communicate these including at interview stage.

4 Include details of parental policies on your website

Generic and unspecific statements such as "generous maternity package" won't meet the

requirements of the publication bill and more importantly leave applicants none the wiser as to what's on offer. Many "visible" ranking employers would jump to "highly visible" simply by including specifics such as pay and duration of ShPL, maternity or paternity leave. The Civil Service goes into a lot of detail on individual parental policies, while PwC and EY make it easy for parents to understand the total package of benefits on offer to them by listing them in one place.

It can be harder to communicate specifics around flexible working. EY demonstrate how seriously they take flexible work by talking about the research they conducted and how this has informed their own offering.

5 Show and tell

Your employees are the best advocates of your policies. All beacon websites include blogs, podcasts and videos of working parents sharing their experiences. Be sure to show the full range of support you offer from helping new parents make the transition to working parents through to young adulthood. Accenture regularly updates its blogs on working parents.



6 Demonstrate a supportive culture

The most generous parental policies will fall flat if parents fear their career will be penalised if they take them up. This is particularly true for men and ShPL. Trail blaze stories of men that have taken ShPL and those in senior positions who work flexibly. You'll find numerous examples of these stories from dads on all the beacon websites.

7 Sign up to the Working Families "Happy to talk flexible working" campaign

Use their logo to advertise your commitment to flexible working. The Civil Service has a section that explains how they use the campaign to support recruitment.

8 Get external validation

Enter awards such as Timewise Power 50, Times top 100 employers for women and Working Families Top 10 employers for working families. The entry process is a great learning exercise in itself to understand how effective your support is and benchmark against other employers. If you make the list be sure you PR your success by

communicating which initiative(s) won the award and how employees have benefited from them.

9 What do the optics say?

Take a look at the images you use on your website. Are working parents visible? This is an issue particularly for employers in the STEM, construction and transport sectors that are perceived to offer less support for working mothers than other sectors and want to attract more women.

10 Make sure your data backs up the optics

We could not find a single example of an employer that talks explicitly about tracking the pay and progress of flexible workers. Talented applicants will use employers' published gender pay gap reports to gauge whether the optics reflect reality.



5 What can employers do to strengthen their support for working families?

Check you have a full understanding of the needs of working parents at each stage of parenthood

Talk to your employees with dependents aged 0-18. Identify the challenges and support a parent might need from early years through to exams.



Analyse the support you currently offer, what works, what doesn't?

As a starting point you may find it helpful to ask:

- What is our take up of ShPL? Do we know why this is and what we need to do to increase take up?
- What percentage of women return to work after their first/second child?
- What happens to women's careers when they return to work especially after the second child? Are they returning to the same career path or stepping off the career track?
- Do we track pay and progress of our flexible workers? What does the data tell us about pay and progression? Are women's careers flat lining? If so what do we need to do to prevent this?
- Does the support we offer parents mirror their needs in real life? The flexibility a parent with an infant needs is very different to that of an employee with children at secondary school.
- Do men feel comfortable asking for flexible/ PT working arrangements to share childcare more equally with their partner?
- Do we provide a supportive culture for working parents from board level, to line manager and among co-workers?
- Do colleagues consider parents' childcare and school schedule arrangements before organising a meeting or event?
- What does our website tell an external applicant about our attitude toward working parents?
- Do our external communications feature parents who work flexible hours to convey a family-friendly culture?

Use this data to form a cohesive approach to attract, retain and develop working parents – check out the websites of beacon ranking employers. Most have a section that speaks directly to this audience



Explore how the following benefits might support your employees:

Shared Parental Leave with enhanced pay for dads

Publicise details of your offer widely with case studies of dads that take it up.

Parental Transition Coaching to help parents

Feature this benefit which helps parents to navigate their career successfully while becoming new parents. Emphasise that Managers are also offered coaching when their employees are about to become parents. This gets across that your

company can see the need for cultural change towards a more flexible workplace and that it's not all about "fixing the women".

A career development path that enables potential leaders to step on and off the career ladder

Not wanting to "have it all and at the same time" is a valid choice for some parents. Ensure that your talent management processes reflect the changing shape of careers today and are not still representative of a previous paradigm where men worked and women stayed at home to look after the children.


About ECC


ECC has 25 years' experience helping employers support working parents as they progress through the different stages of parenthood.

We also help employers remove the barriers that contribute to women's careers flat lining; barriers that are now understood to contribute to the gender pay gap.

We work both nationally and internationally, tailoring content through our understanding of local markets.

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