

A photograph of a diverse family of four sitting together and reading a book. The father, a Black man, is on the left, pointing at the book. The mother, a white woman, is on the right, looking down at the book. A young girl with dark curly hair is in the foreground, also looking at the book. A young boy is partially visible behind her. The scene is set in a dimly lit room, possibly a bedroom, with a bed visible in the background. The overall mood is warm and focused.

Adecco

Family Matters: Helping Working Parents Thrive

Mining untapped talent pools for
great hires in Ireland and the UK

We're all about people.

Attracting and retaining talent for long-term success

The pandemic has driven massive shifts in working patterns, employee needs and employers' responsibility towards their people. Faced with significant staff and skills shortages, employers now need to approach hiring and retaining key talent in a new way.

Along with a growing talent pool of untapped potential, there is a real opportunity to transform workforces for future success.

At Adecco, we connect thousands of people who are at risk in the labour market with purposeful jobs each year, while providing companies with key talent to take their business forward.

In this paper, *Family Matters: Helping Working Parents Thrive*, we share our views on how organisations can rethink their approach to working parents and address challenges this demographic faces in the working world. We provide guidance on attracting and retaining working parents and highlight how to ensure this valuable talent succeeds long-term.

“ It is our core mission to make the future work for everyone. We believe in talent, not labels, and we know that differences are not deficits ”



Why working parents are key for your workforce

The onset of the pandemic has impacted every employee, across every sector, across the globe. It was a particularly challenging time for working parents who had to reconcile home working or furlough with caring and schooling responsibilities.

Despite concerns, the pandemic did not lead to mass unemployment in Ireland and the UK and it also did not push working parents out of the workforce. However, the current cost of living crisis is leading some parents to reconsider their working patterns and if one parent should remain home.

British parents face the highest childcare costs in Europe. It is also the reluctance of some employers to accept flexible working requests that is causing some working parents to leave the workforce. While the issue of childcare costs can only be addressed by the Government, employers can support working parents in many ways.

It is vital to enable working parents and carers to access and stay in employment, a matter of particular importance during the cost of living crisis. With labour shortages and the rising number of working parents leaving the workforce or changing jobs, employers should recognise the changes that need to be made. Organisations can turn the tide to attract and retain working parents and thus, transform their workforce.

We're here to show you how.

One in three (32%)

working parents with pre-school children spend more than a third of their wages on childcare

8 in 10

fathers say that their employer is not doing enough to support fathers in the workplace

43%

of working mothers say that the cost of childcare has made them consider leaving their job

70%

of parents and carers worked flexibly in 2021, compared to just 55% in 2019

79%

of employers in Ireland and the UK offer enhanced maternity leave pay and 67% offer enhanced paternity or partner leave pay

46%

of fathers say they have, or would consider switching roles to access better paternity leave and pay



Working mothers

All working parents have struggled through the pandemic yet working mothers have been especially impacted. Women continue to bear most of the burden of childcare and housework, while also being more likely to have been on furlough or made redundant during the pandemic. **For the first time in decades, in Ireland and the UK the number of women not returning to work after having a baby has increased.** The key reasons behind this are the cost of childcare, which for many women with two or more young children simply outstrips their salary, and a lack of employer support.

Working mothers continue to experience workplace inequality compared to fathers

in regards to promotions, recognition, compensation, team involvement and favouritism. **42% of working mothers say they would not feel comfortable asking about flexible working opportunities in a job interview** as they believe they would be discriminated against and rejected for doing so. When employees see others advancing, but lack the support they need to move forward in their own career, it is understandable if their desire to remain in or return to a job is low. By addressing the broader picture and openly offering benefits that are inclusive of all caregivers, employers can foster this valuable talent and ensure working mothers thrive well into the future.



Attracting working parents

Building a diverse workforce that is inclusive of working parents starts with tapping into that talent pool. Rethink hiring processes to make sure you're not only finding the best candidates but are also ensuring each candidate feels seen and understood and is therefore driven to join your organisation. Here's how:

Provide family-focused benefits

Offering benefits that help working parents in their roles now and in the future will set you apart from the competition. Find out from existing working parents in your company what works, what they appreciate and what else they'd like to see. A family-friendly culture can include flexible schedules, remote options, paid family leave, emergency caregiving leave or providing mentors who are working parents themselves.

Be clear, transparent, and accessible

You may already have family-friendly policies and benefits, but are they visible to candidates? Ensure every job description states these clearly and they are up to date, as this sends the positive message that your company is inclusive. Moreover, this will make candidates feel more comfortable asking about parental benefits during the interview process. Update your careers page so that all benefits are easy to view and use working parents' stories within the company as real-life examples of what being in your organisation will look like.

Upskill leaders

Provide leaders with up-to-date information, training and workshops so they always know the latest policies and benefits your company provides for working parents. Because many leaders will be part of the hiring process, it's important that they understand how to deliver an inclusive message – and what should be included in that message – when communicating with candidates.

Offer flexibility

Having a flexible working schedule is no longer a perk, it should be a given. This is especially true for working parents, who have to balance family responsibilities and work obligations daily. When creating job descriptions, put flexibility front and centre. This doesn't just mean offering flexible hours, it can encompass hybrid or fully remote options, job sharing (splitting a full-time role into two part-time roles) and returnships (easing back into the workforce in a short-term role while upskilling for the future).

Reflect your culture with role models

When promoting your inclusive company culture, incorporate working parents' success stories. There will be positive stories to tell from a diverse group of people here, such as different age groups, sexual identity, race and types of roles. You can also involve working parent role

models in the hiring process. They can help with wording on job descriptions and screening applications as well as contribute to interviews. This not only demonstrates how opportunities truly impact people within your company but can reduce bias during the selection process.



Who are working parents?

Many companies focus their resources on new parents, yet the term 'working parents' goes well beyond this stage. Being a working parent spans years and it includes foster, biological, adoptive, single and LGBTQ+ parents, men, women, parents of children with disabilities, all from different backgrounds. Those who are caregivers for their spouses or their aging parents also struggle with the challenges of balancing family responsibilities and work obligations. Understanding that 'working parents' encompasses a broad range of situations, family structures and people means a company can foster an inclusive workplace. Encouraging **all** employees to take time off when they need to care for loved ones sends a clear message that everyone matters.



Fostering working parent talent for future success

What does the 'new normal' look like for your organisation? Employees have proven that remote or hybrid working can be successful and having increased autonomy over schedules has enabled an improved work-life balance. For working parents, it is crucial that positive workplace changes implemented during the pandemic continue, and are adaptable, holistic and supportive. Here's what working parents need from their managers for long-term success:

Listen to what parents want

Listen to experiences of working parents. You can gather information using surveys, during performance reviews, or casual conversations. This way, you can get a clear picture of what this talent is missing. Remember, however, that this shouldn't be a one size fits all approach, it's about understanding individual needs and working with those parents to develop the best path forwards.

Adopt tailored schedules

Parents constantly balance their family responsibilities with work, and demands can be wildly different from one parent to the next. For example, an employee with nursery-age children is going to have different priorities to one with older children. Let employees set their own schedules. This provides autonomy and empowers them. Moreover, demonstrating your trust means they will be more engaged.

Refocus on outcomes

The pandemic and the resulting increase in remote working has taught us that workers can be trusted to work independently. Gone are the days when the number of hours sat at a desk is what counts. The focus needs to be on the quality of work produced. Tying into flexible work schedules, this allows working parents to adjust their day according to fluctuating responsibilities while remaining productive.

Provide meaningful support

This starts with a flexible schedule, yet additional programmes that offer tangible support make the difference between an engaged, productive working parent, and one who is overworked and has checked out. From childcare programmes and meal prep assistance to parent counselling, workshops or lactation rooms, offering benefits that go beyond the bare minimum is key to retaining this talent.

Foster a culture of wellbeing

Think of time off as a chance for employees to reset, refresh, and come back to the workplace invigorated. Leaders need to lead by example by taking breaks regularly, adopting a hybrid or remote working model, and using annual leave. Pay attention to employees with a significant number of rollover days and make time to ask why. For working parents, not taking time off can quickly lead to burnout. Making time off an essential part of working is a simple way to ease employee stress, without having to create an entirely new program.

Communicate and collaborate with purpose

Help parents prioritise by making sure communication is clear. Simply putting “for next week” or “urgent” in an email subject line can help. Ask employees when the best time is

for regular meetings, always providing remote capabilities. Consider whether a meeting is really necessary before arranging it. A quick call or message is often a better option, saving everyone valuable time.

Create a supportive community

Create a space on your intranet where parents can share resources. Have someone within the team to help guide and provide advice, keep working parents in the loop on the latest benefits and programmes, as well as pass on knowledge on how to balance home and work life. Knowing they are not alone and that their employer understands they need support strengthens workplace relationships and forms a culture of empathy.



Impactful working parent benefits

Which benefits you can provide to working parents depends on the location and size of your company. But thinking beyond flexibility and enhanced parental leave can greatly influence whether a candidate joins your company, or an employee remains satisfied. Here are some benefits which make a difference:

Family-focussed discounts

Provide vouchers or discounts for family-friendly entertainment, grocery shopping, restaurants or activities to encourage working parents to enjoy their time off. It is relatively low-cost yet makes a positive impact on work-life balance.

Childcare

Offering childcare benefits can take on various forms, from onsite care and contributing financially, to connecting parents with nearby facilities. This enables parents to cope with childcare costs and spend more time with their children, while easing stress and shortening commutes.

Inclusive support for starting a family

Families come in all shapes and sizes. Help employees with the financial burden of adoption or in vitro fertilisation to make a meaningful impact. Show all employees you are committed to their all-round happiness, in and out of work.

Wellbeing programmes

Make wellbeing part of your culture. This can include mental health support such as counselling or mentoring and discounts for fitness activities.

Enable smooth return to work

So-called returnships allow employees who have taken parental leave to ease back into the workforce. By starting with a short-term position, they have a chance to re-skill and upskill so they can then return to a permanent role with confidence.

Key takeaways

The pandemic shone a stark light on what many working parents have long dealt with in the world of work. The inequality and complex challenges faced by caregivers means those within this demographic are increasingly leaving the workforce. Yet, it has also shown that changes organisations were forced to make during this time have been highly beneficial. With a more flexible schedule and remote working opportunities, parents have been able to balance work and home life more effectively. Those employers who have adapted their recruitment, onboarding and in-house policies – and remained adaptable

– have benefitted from higher retention and more satisfied employees.

Going forward, as we continue to adapt to the new normal, a holistic, person-centric approach will be necessary to attract and retain working parents. Employers have the power to empower this invaluable talent with the *right* benefits, flexible schedules, paid family leave, and by fostering a company culture of support for all caregivers. By taking these steps now, employers have an opportunity to make the future work for everyone.





Adecco. We're all about people.



We see *The Great Resignation* as an opportunity to revitalise tired, homogeneous workforces with an injection of fresh-thinking talent from the margins.



We develop programmes and pathways to reduce workforce barriers and strengthen employability through training.



We embrace workers across the whole diversity spectrum – and mine untapped talent pools that others ignore.



We reimagine outdated strategies across the entire recruitment process. We reject well-trodden paths.

**People with diverse abilities are ready and able to work.
Let Adecco's recruitment service help you hire them.**

Our parent company, The Adecco Group, is part of [The Valuable 500](#) initiative, alongside companies like Apple, Google, EY, and the BBC. It's a growing global movement dedicated to placing disability on the business leadership agenda.