

Mums Returning to Work

training support pack: a resource to support employers achieve Mum Friendly status.

What's the resource for?

The Mums Returning to Work training support pack draws on the expertise of women returning to the workplace after maternity and the impact on their families. Businesses and third sector organisations have been part of its development. Our partners in the childcare sector have been key to piloting and implementing the training, policy and practice changes across their services to achieve 'Mum Friendly' status. Their knowledge and expertise is documented in the resource as a guide for good practice, including practical steps on how to make changes for the benefit of the workplace.

- This resource aims to assist employers in understanding the positive impact of creating a culture in the workplace that supports women through maternity and on their return to work.
- Provides transferable approaches that can be adopted across different sectors.
- Offers support for the implementation of Mum Friendly policies and practice across the workplace to achieve Mum Friendly status.

What's in each section?

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Background to Mums Returning to Work

Outlines our vision, the project and why becoming a Mum Friendly workplace is important.

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Creating a Mum Friendly workplace

How you actually become a Mum Friendly employer, maintain your status and how this all fits within the wider policy landscape.

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Everyday good practice examples from existing Mum Friendly employers.

01

**Mums
Returning
to Work**

Mums Returning to Work is a project designed by Outside the Box to create Mum Friendly workplaces. The project was funded by the Scottish Government Workplace Equalities Fund. The Scottish Government created this fund because they want to support a diverse labour market, with equal opportunities and access to workplaces that are inclusive of everyone.

Why is this important?

Every year in the UK as many as

54,000

mums feel that they have to leave their jobs

77%

of mums say they have had a negative or discriminatory experience during pregnancy, maternity leave, and/or on return from maternity leave

1 in 5

mums (20% or up to 100,000 women) said that they experience negative comments or harassment in relation to flexible working or pregnancy

We're losing skilled, experienced women. There is lots of information out there about women's maternity rights and employers legal obligations yet we're still systematically failing women, their families and the workplace. We know this is because of a gap in support for employers and women when they return to work. Mums Returning to Work has been developed to support employers and their teams to create a space for open discussion about what works and to provide a point to navigate learning across different sectors.



Even with the best of intentions, it can be challenging as an employer to understand how good practice obligations 'fit' the individual workplace. This is why it's so important to open up the conversation- to bridge the gap between policy and practice and get it right for women and employers.

The Mum Friendly employer award

Why 'Mum Friendly' employers?

Policy does not always meet practice in supporting women through maternity. This can be even more challenging on women's return to work. The wellbeing of a whole workforce can be affected if there are policy and practice gaps in how to meaningfully support women's maternity and return to work. The cost to employers is often high levels of absenteeism and high staff turnover. We have found that when employers are not responsive to these gaps, they are at risk of the cost of prolonged or extended maternity leave, losing skilled staff and high recruitment costs coupled with the time it takes to train new staff. This has a negative impact on long-term business strategies and revenue.

Employers we worked with to develop this resource shared that working to create an inbuilt equalities approach starting from recruitment meant all roles can be advertised as 'Mum Friendly', flexible with a family friendly focus- including for carers. Supporting the mental health and wellbeing of employees is seen as crucial in embedding positive working practice.

Taking on a sincerely flexible working environment means treating your employees with trust and allows space for them to participate in shaping how flexible working can benefit the overall workplace.

What is our Vision for Mum Friendly employers?

Our vision for Mum Friendly workplaces is one in which equalities practice is embedded meaningfully for the benefit and wellbeing of all workers - where staff teams work in partnership with their employers to shape workplace policy and practice. We believe that supporting the wellbeing of the workforce is key to productivity. This includes nurturing a culture where women returners know they have job security, effective voice, equal access to workplace opportunities, fulfilment and respect.

02

Creating a Mum Friendly Workplace

How does an employer become a 'Mum Friendly' workplace?

There are a number of simple steps involved in becoming a Mum Friendly employer. We have tried to ensure that certain minimum standards are being met so that sufficient meaningful changes are made, but also create space to allow flexibility in the varied approaches employers will take across different sectors.

Steps:

- 1** Register an interest in becoming a Mum Friendly employer and set up initial meetings with staff and managers.
- 2** Staff team carry out Mums Returning to Work online training followed by families mental health and wellbeing training and complete evaluations.
- 3** We will follow up with feedback to teams and discuss what needs to happen to support embedding equalities practice and /or policies. We provide ongoing practical advice and support to help implement changes and identify further recommendations. We do this by checking in at agreed points throughout the project.
- 4** Celebrate!! Let everyone know what you've achieved and keep sending us examples of good practice so we can share it with others.

How does an employer maintain the Mum Friendly stamp?

After 2 years we will carry out an evaluation with you and your teams to look at whether any further actions need to be taken. It could be that staff changes mean there is a need for further or refreshed training, some practice might need looked at again or you might want help with implementing new ideas. We will discuss all of this with you and once we are satisfied your workplace is still Mum Friendly, you will receive an updated stamp.

How does the Mum Friendly employer fit with the Fair Work Framework?

What are the dimensions of 'Fair Work'?

Fair work is work that offers all individuals an effective voice, opportunity, security, fulfilment and respect. It balances the rights and responsibilities of employers and workers and generates benefits for individuals, organisations and society. For more information visit:

www.fairworkconvention.scot/the-fair-work-framework/

Effective Voice

Runs through each stage of the project; by carrying out initial meetings with staff separate to managers we ensure people are free to express their experiences of the workplace, so that we can support the workplace to develop practice that is responsive to this. The online training builds on these initial conversations to allow staff and managers identify good practice, as well as challenges or any changes to policy and practice. At each stage the workers voice is pivotal to practice change and development.

Opportunity

From the outset we explore with managers and staff where any barriers to opportunity arises and draw on previous learning to support new approaches to practice. For example, previous Mum Friendly employers adopted a workplace buddy scheme to support mum returners. The existing online training is equalities focused and we encourage employers to embed this at recruitment to ensure a better informed staff team and a culture where workplace wellbeing is valued.

Security

'Mum Friendly' activities work to engage and educate the staff teams on the rights of women through maternity and on their return to work. We explore rights to flexible working and how these arrangements can be put into practice to retain good staff and to support mums back from maternity - key to creating a secure working environment both for staff and for the workplace as a whole.

Fulfilment

Recognising and building on the skills of Mums Returning to Work is acknowledged by existing Mum Friendly employers to be an investment in the workplace. We support staff to be part of the co-design and delivery of new practice so that staff are also recognised as leaders of change.

Respect

We support employers and their teams to reduce discrimination or stereotyping in the workplace via training and ongoing discussions. Mums Returning to Work creates space for employers and staff to have open conversations for clear communication and reciprocal management of expectations. We support the development of ideas from staff teams and management by creating spaces for equal engagement in a process that is asset based.

Top Tips for a Mum Friendly Workplace

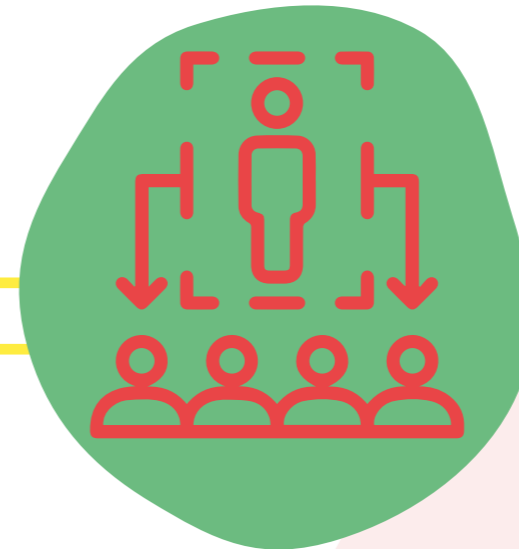
Stage 1: cultural overview

- Go beyond an 'open door' policy – check in regularly to ask staff how they are at a time and place when they can answer sincerely.
- Encourage work based social support throughout the staff team.
- Give time to settle back in – be it through a phased return or managing workloads.
- Take an interest, tell people what they're doing well, that you value them.
- Support and respect wellbeing for individual workers and the team as a whole.
- Value skills that mums can bring to help shape workplace practice.
- Be committed to opportunities for learning throughout the staff team.
- Be flexible in the knowledge that it's more likely you will retain good staff.



Stage 2: the how for managers

- 1** Be mindful: that you're giving off the right signals. If you place importance on supporting a wellbeing culture that supports mums and families, then others will too.
- 2** Keep it on the agenda: place an equalities focus at the heart of your practice and take the lead by ensuring a Mum Friendly culture is added to workplace improvement plans.
- 3** Encourage: change to workplace culture can be challenging – however small – staff teams will need extra support and encouragement when it comes to embedding different attitudes and ways of adopting new practice.
- 4** Evaluate: Create space for reflection to identify if things are working and gather evidence of whether new changes are making the desired impact.



Stage 3: team ideas and reflections

- How are women supported through maternity and returning to work in your workplace?
- How do you promote workplace social support?
- Is mental health and wellbeing looked after?
- Do you have clear equalities policies in place and do they reflect practice?

03

Looking after mental health and wellbeing

From speaking to women we know, returning to work after maternity can be a trigger to perinatal mental ill health. Many women feel vulnerable and guilty about leaving their baby and will often no longer have the same supports available to them as before- such as family and baby peer support groups.

For the overall wellbeing of staff teams it is important employers are aware of how to support mental health. Perinatal and infant mental health is from the moment of conception until a child is about 3 years old and can have a significant impact on both the health of the mum and her baby across this period of time. If you support mental health in the workplace then you will be supporting perinatal mental health too.

Some signs that might help you recognise when someone might be struggling are:

Tearfulness

Loss of confidence

Seeming depressed

Exhausted

Showing anxiety or mood swings

Some of the ways you can look after mental health and wellbeing are:

- Go beyond an open door policy by creating a space where your staff members feel they can talk.
- If you feel something is going on, it's important you acknowledge it within a supportive and non-judgemental conversation.
- Listen to and accept what they are telling you- be alongside them with empathy.
- Show your willingness to understand the emotional impact, issues and challenges that are being experienced.
- Know your limitations- sometimes it won't be possible for you to deal with the challenges your employee is facing alone and so signposting to agencies who are experts in this field is vital.
- Even when an employee doesn't show any of the signs or symptoms of mental ill health - just making space for these regular check-ins is good practice to support mums returning to work and the overall team.

- Become trauma informed - in the workplace to increase your understanding of what trauma is, how it can affect people and how people can be supported to recover.

For more information visit:

www.crossreach.org.uk/our-locations/crossreach-bluebell-perinatal-service

www.nhsinform.scot/search?q=mental+health&locpt=&ds=&tab=inform

www.samh.org.uk/

www.mind.org.uk/

04

**Shining
Lights-
good
practice
examples**

Real practice examples of 'Mum Friendly' workplaces

ACE Place Nursery and Out of School Care awarded 'Mum Friendly' status

ACE Place and Out of School Care, situated in Rutherglen Glasgow aceplacenursery.co.uk/ is an equal opportunities and Living Wage employer who believe their staff are the biggest asset in promoting connections with children and their families at the heart of their service delivery.

Indigo Childcare Group awarded 'Mum Friendly' status

Indigo is a social enterprise, operating as a limited company situated in Castlemilk Glasgow. indigogrp.com/index.html They are committed to nurturing the wellbeing of their staff team in order to secure the best possible outcomes for their children and young people.

Putting into practice flexible and practical working solutions is of huge benefit to both workplace settings. Despite having a predominately female workforce, set hours and strict staff ratios, they have been able to negotiate a working culture where staff feel valued and deliver a successful service as a result.

Everyday practice examples: Ace Place and Indigo

Effective Voice: We conduct a survey annually to measure staff satisfaction across a number of factors such as communication, salary, wellbeing and job fulfilment. Staff can feedback anonymously any issues they may have.

Opportunity: Career development and progression is actively promoted. Managers agree training and learning outcomes with staff at six monthly intervals via our performance review process.

Security: Staff are employed for the most part on permanent contracts, the exception being where they have been recruited to cover a period of sickness or maternity/paternity leave. Security of employment is promoted by contracting all staff for regular hours- any variations to hours are agreed mutually through a variation of contract terms and conditions.

Fulfilment: At Indigo, we aim to support staff both professionally and personally. As practitioners, it is essential staff feel fulfilled within their role, providing the best outcomes for our children and young people. It is important that we offer our staff team various avenues to support this, including providing free mandatory training throughout all our services as well as supporting staff to take ownership of their own learning.

Respect: ACE Place is an accredited Real Living Wage Employer, staff are remunerated accordingly with salaries reviewed annually as part of a fair and equal pay policy.

“We are delighted to be recognised as a 'Mum Friendly Workplace'. Our team work hard to make all returning mums feel secure and welcome at ACE Place, and our policies to support this are all the stronger as a result of working with Outside the Box.

It's important as childcare providers that we set a good example in supporting working parents, giving them flexibility where we can to return to the career they love. We hope that other local businesses can follow our lead and support their staff too”.

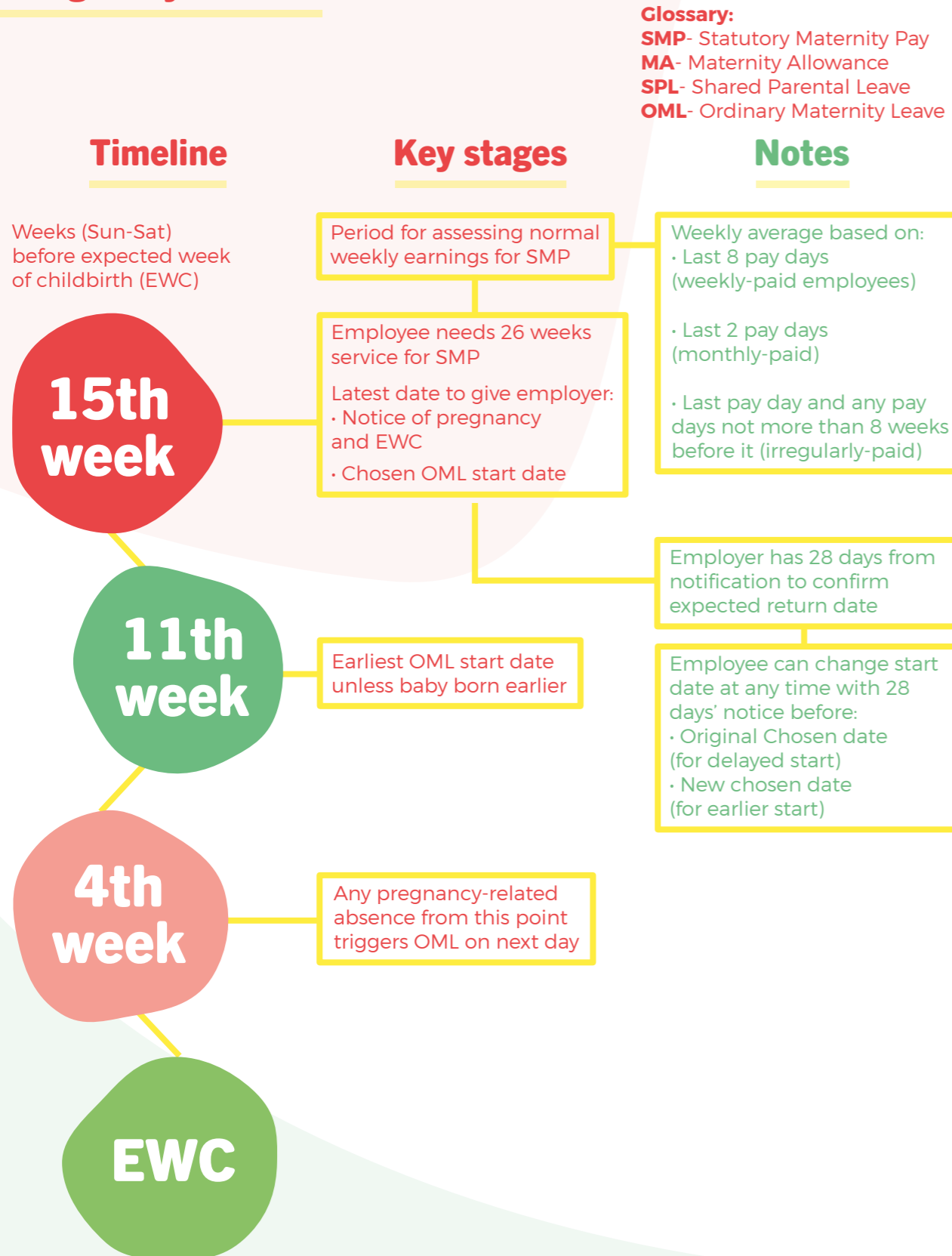
Ashleigh Anderson, Nursery and Out of School Care Manager

“Mums Returning to Work has been really helpful to focus our minds on how accessible and inclusive we are as an employer definitely for Mums but for all employees - being a mum friendly workplace is really just inclusive employment practice and that fits well with our values. The training has been really helpful, especially for our middle management level, supporting them to further develop their supervisory skills in a way that again fits well with our values. The feedback we received from the majority of our staff team was shock at the number of challenges that Mum's were faced with in terms of their maternity rights.

We now hope that with our continued commitment to our staff, our strong belief in our organisational values and our new knowledge and understanding gained from working alongside the team at Outside the Box that staff at all levels are able to support each other and potential new families that look to join our services”.

Jacqueline Lamb, Chief Executive Office of Indigo Childcare Group.

Pregnancy timeline



Your employee does not need to let you know they are pregnant until week 25 but if they do let you know in the very early stages, it's helpful to ensure they have access to their employment rights. Visit www.mumsreturningtowork.org for info on maternity rights and to be signposted to other places for help.

Maternity leave & returning to work timeline

Week 1 Arrival of the baby

Week 2 Women are not allowed to return to work within two weeks of giving birth.

If your employee wants to return before the end of their 52 weeks maternity, they have to give 8 weeks written notice. They can work up to 10 KIT days during maternity without it affecting their SMP or MA.

Weeks 6-25

- Post-natal health check, weeks 6-8
- If receiving income support, this comes to an end at week 15
- Best Start Grant- claims must be submitted before the baby is 6 months old, for more information visit: www.mygov.scot
- KIT days, being sent updates from the workplace

Week 35 Right to request flexible working

This might be a good time to discuss arrangements for return to work if you haven't done so already. An employee has the right to request flexible working if they want to return part-time, different hours, from home. This should be done with enough time for negotiation so that arrangements can be made at work. Employees who have at least 26 weeks service can make a formal request which an employer should respond to within 3 months.

Week 49 Unpaid parental leave at the end of maternity

At the end of maternity leave or SPL, this is the latest an employee must send 21 days' notice if they started maternity at birth. They need to have one year's service to take parental leave, time spent on maternity leave counts towards length of service.

Week 52 Last week of maternity if started at birth

If returning sooner than this, your employee must have given 8 weeks written notice of their return date. No notice is required if returning at the end of 52 weeks. If an employee is ill at the end of their maternity leave, normal workplace sickness procedures apply. The person has the right to return to the same job or if that is not reasonably practicable, a suitable job on similar terms and conditions.

You have a health and safety duty to employees who have given birth in the last six months or who are breastfeeding. A risk assessment should be carried out at this point to ensure the safety of your employee and their baby. This is also a good time for regular check-ins using the Mums Returning to Work Employers support pack and website www.mumsreturningtowork.org for practical advice.

We'd like to thank all the mums, employers and our partners who helped with this resource.



Contact us

Outside the Box provides independent support to groups and people across Scotland who want to make a difference in their communities. We work on a broad range of projects offering support, information, training, evaluation and advice.

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