

# Managing Maternity 2007

## First annual survey of workplace practice on maternity and retention

Recent research undertaken by ICAS in partnership with Managing Maternity Ltd makes it clear that there is a changing emphasis in the workplace on maternity and retention.

The survey, of mostly HR representatives, illustrated that many organisations simply do not know the size and scale of the maternity challenge.

However there are encouraging messages for employers: The factors which affect a woman's decision whether or not to return to work after having a baby can be greatly influenced by their employer, with issues such as implementation of flexible working and career development opportunities which allow work-life balance, being identified as important.

Respondents identified that there is scope for improvement as far as communication during maternity leave is concerned, and there is, a particular need for enhanced guidance and support for managers.

### Key findings

- There is a trend towards women taking longer maternity leave: 8.1 months is the average length of maternity leave 10 – 12 months is typical in almost a third of organisations with implications for communication and managing return.
- Estimated return rates of 96% in the public sector and 79% in the private sector (84% overall) were reported after maternity leave but a lack of recording of return rates and retention statistics is brought to light.



- 1 in 5 respondents representing private sector organisations believe their return rate is a source of concern.
- The importance of part-time / flexible working options and other supportive strategies emerged as a key theme.
- More than a quarter of respondents see managers as being less than effective in handling communication and other critical challenges during pregnancy, maternity leave and return to work.
- Clear workplace issues were identified as having an impact on the decision of women not to return to work:
  - o 42% of respondents believe that following maternity leave women are put off by lack of career development opportunities which allow work-life balance.
  - o 40% cite the reluctance / difficulties faced by managers in implementing flexible working.
  - o Almost 1 in 3 respondents claim that an unsympathetic workplace culture has impacted on a woman's decision not to return to work; getting on for a quarter stated this impact is significant.



For further information visit [www.icasworld.com/surveys](http://www.icasworld.com/surveys) or to request a full copy of the report please email [managingmaternity@icasgroup.com](mailto:managingmaternity@icasgroup.com)



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It is clear that there is a place for improved information, guidance and support for managers, as well as other strategies for improving retention at this pivotal stage in a woman's career. The ICAS/Managing Maternity services can assist organisations with this need.

Below are some examples of ways ICAS/Managing Maternity services have worked with clients at the three levels: organisation, manager and individual.

### Organisation level: HR masterclass – Leading global law firm

**Why?** Feedback from an audit found inconsistent handling of pregnancy, maternity leave and return to work, no single point of contact and confusing policies – who do I talk to?

**What?** An HR Masterclass for Specialist Advisors to enhance knowledge, understanding and skill in supporting managers and handling individual cases. Legal, health and safety issues, Pre-Maternity Leave Review Structure and maternity coaching model.

**Results** All pregnant employees are offered a session with a Specialist Advisor covering health and safety, planning maternity leave and return, communication with manager and colleagues, flexible working etc. Managers are also offered a similar separate session. Excellent take-up and feedback from all concerned, opportunity to air and address concerns, elimination of time-consuming queries and resulting issues.

### Manager level: Best Practice Guidance – Leading UK University

**Why?** Concerns about losing female academics and their specialist expertise. Desire to adopt a more family-friendly culture and give more practical support to managers.

**What?** Intranet best practice guidance – the impact of management, planning maternity leave and return, flexible working – making it work, communication during maternity leave, case studies, challenges for academic women, FAQs, resource bank.

**Results** Seen as a real demonstration of commitment to supporting women, with excellent feedback from both managers and women about how useful the tools and ideas are, enabling open, honest communication about how to ensure a smooth and successful transition.



### Individual level: Maternity coaching – Global consultancy and accountancy organisation

**Why?** Increasing awareness within the firm of the retention and transition issues facing women around having children and the desire to provide support.

**What?** A development session for internal coaches to enhance understanding of the emotional and psychological changes for women, use of the Maternity Project™ model for assessment and evaluation in coaching, to be clearer in how they approach maternity coaching as a team.

**Results** A step change in internal understanding of the transition issues and the value of maternity coaching. The introduction of the Maternity Project™ model has enabled a consistency of approach and greater confidence among the team. This session has contributed to a wider review of the support available to women returning from maternity leave and plans are in place for management training.



The ICAS in partnership with Managing Maternity range of services includes:

- Maternity Coaching and Group Coaching
- Managers Workshops and Guidance; Pre-Maternity Leave Review
- Consultancy, MAMA Audit, Specialist HR Workshops
- Training for internal coaches, mentors and maternity buddies
- Keeping in Touch Day workshops, Lunchtime seminars

For further information contact [managingmaternity@icasgroup.com](mailto:managingmaternity@icasgroup.com) or call ICAS on **0800 068 68 58**



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