



FATHERS IN THE WORKPLACE TOOLKIT

Shared Parental Leave Mythbusters

Because Shared Parental Leave is a relatively new policy it is currently not well understood by parents, organisations or in many cases by HR departments. This lack of understanding often combined with poor communication leads to a lot of myths and miscommunication. As such we have produced a mythbuster document outlining many of the most common myths around Shared Parental Leave and explained the reality in a clear manner to support parents' understanding.

1. Parents and organisations often assume that for a second parent to take SPL, the other parent has to return to work.

Reality: SPL can be used simultaneously by both parents including while the other parent is on Maternity Leave but it can also be used without the other parent present.

2. Parents and organisations often mistake Shared Parental Leave for Parental Leave which is a different policy

Reality: Shared Parental Leave is an entitlement which allows parents to share up to 50 weeks of leave within the first year after birth or adoption. Parental Leave is a policy which allows parents to take 18 weeks unpaid leave to be with their children in certain circumstances up until their 18th birthday.

3. Some parents believe that the SPL needs to be shared equally between parents (e.g., six months each)

Reality: Shared Parental Leave can enable a second parent to have as little as one week or as much as 50 weeks leave to care for their child within the first year after birth or adoption. They can take time at the start for example adding to Paternity leave or take a few weeks later in the year to support their partner and bond with the child.

4. Parents believe that to take Shared Parental Leave they have to take all the leave in one go (i.e., they don't know about blocks)

Reality: Shared Parental Leave can be used in one continuous period of time but it can also be used in what are referred to as 'blocks', which means a parent can take a period of Shared Parental Leave, return to work and then go back on Shared Parental Leave again. This means families can use leave flexibly in a way which works for their family.

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5. Mothers don't want fathers to take leave

Reality: Many mothers actively encourage fathers to take leave. Involving partners in child care soon after the birth has a number of benefits including developing routines and bonding as well as reducing the likelihood of stress and mental health issues. Even where mothers are reluctant for fathers to take leave this is often because of the cultural and social pressures mothers face regarding social norms of what is considered to be a 'good mum'.

6. The best thing for a child's development is for the mother to spend the first 12 months caring for them at home

Reality: Research demonstrates that having fathers or other parents actively involved in caring in the first year has significant benefits for the child's development, family relationship, bonding and parental wellbeing.