

Parental Returners Programmes

Improving the experience for
parents in your organisation



connor



Who says you can't combine parenthood and a successful career?

Giving birth, becoming a father, adopting – however you do it, starting or growing a family is one of the greatest transitions an individual can go through.

With that in mind, it's not at all surprising that many people experience challenges when returning to work after parental leave.

Connor's parental returner programmes provide a rich range of tailored support for both individuals and groups before, during, and after parental leave. In partnership with you, we can improve the experience of mums and dads at this key time, increasing their satisfaction and your retention of these talented individuals. We also help you upskill line managers to fully support the transition that employees are navigating, ensuring that your people can balance their careers and their families with a sense of confidence.

As a result, you help your employees maximise their satisfaction and productivity during an incredibly exciting (and sometimes daunting) transition for them; you enable them to contribute to your organisation's success, and you can become an employer of choice for the many talented individuals out there who plan to have a family and a career.

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Given that 89% of people out of paid work caring for family or the home are female, returner programmes can support greater gender diversity across an organisation.”

2017 ONS Labour statistics, Returner Programmes Best Practice Guidance for Employers

The case for parental returner programmes

Though it might seem that the obvious point at which organisations lose parents as employees is during parental leave, our experience has been that many organisations don't struggle with this at all. Instead, it's often the case that disproportionately high numbers of employees leave their job within two years of returning from maternity or parental leave.

At the same time, very few women apply for promotion while on maternity leave, and many thousands of Keeping in Touch Days are left unused suggesting a lack of perceived value from both parties, and engagement during leave.

Encouragingly, many organisations out there are recognising that the experience of parents, especially new mums, needs to improve. Instead of treating parenthood as an issue to solve, they are seeing it as a transition that, if embraced, can improve the lives of their employees immeasurably, while opening up a rich pool of talent for the organisation.

Conversely, if this important transition period isn't addressed, not only will organisations struggle to fulfil their commitment to diversity and inclusion; they'll lose out on valuable, highly experienced talent, and have to bear the cost of hiring and retraining replacements, and the impact on their reputation as a family (un)friendly employer.

“Fully utilising the potential of female professionals could generate additional earnings of £1.1 billion and economic output of £1.7 billion.”

Women Returners, PWC, 2016

A co-created approach designed to nurture and engage

We work with organisations ranging from SMEs to global brands to support their new parents each year. Experience has taught us that, as with any programme of work, parental returner programmes work best when we work in partnership with you to co-create the solution.

Specifically, Connor can help with:

- ✔ Diagnosis to uncover your pain points and areas for possible improvement.
- ✔ Building a programme based on your needs that encompasses current thinking and best practice.

Our clients tell us that one of the things they really value about our approach is that, because we work so closely with them, we get to know their organisation incredibly well. This means we can build a solution with them that reflects the organisation's culture, increasing its engagement and effectiveness.

By combining our experience with your insight, together we can create a programme where every one of your people feels like they are treated as an individual, and supported beginning to end.

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Connor has first-hand experience of our world and solving the problems we face today. It has been a breath of fresh air! ”

HR Director, Europcar

Expert help to define the challenge and solution

Ultimately, new mums and dads leaving your organisation after parental leave is a symptom of other challenges and pain points. Our track record of planning and designing complex people and change projects means that we're able to really get under the skin of your organisation, to define the issues that need addressing in order to improve the experience for your working parents.

We'll look at things including:

- ✔ How well do you keep people engaged with your organisation when they are off on parental leave?
- ✔ Do your line managers understand their role and their impact during this time?
- ✔ Are people given the right information before they go on parental leave? Is that information given consistently across your organisation?
- ✔ Are KIT days fully utilised and what for?
- ✔ How does your organisation respond to someone announcing their intention to take parental leave?
- ✔ How well is your organisation set up to support parents once they are back at work?

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Only 18% of mums felt happy and confident about returning to work after maternity leave; 37% felt so isolated at work that they considered leaving. ”

MMB Magazine survey, 2018

A flexible range of support options

Though the exact makeup of each programme is tailored to your organisation, people and objectives, our experience tells us that the best way to support new parents is to engage with them before, during and after their parental leave. The programme we co-create with you, therefore, is likely to cover these three important phases:

Line manager support and training

People rarely leave an organisation – more often they leave their line manager. We can ensure line managers are best equipped to support their reports, including full understanding of employee obligations and rights, and their own impact as someone's manager in this transition period.

Helpful content

We can create and provide content to support employees and line managers throughout the transition.

This can include branded journals, line manager training content, and more. To ensure that your employees can access this content while they are on leave, we can make this content available digitally.

Ongoing personal and professional support

Providing development opportunities in areas such as change, resilience, leadership, networking, influence & impact and other key topics ensure returners have the confidence and skills to navigate the change and progress their career as a parent.

Pre-Leave

We prepare your leavers and their managers for the transition, giving them confidence and building strong links with their support network.

During Leave

We help your employees stay in touch with the organisation, continue to build their skills and coach them through this exciting new step in their lives.

Post Return

We support your employee to make a smooth transition back into the workplace, feeling confident, engaged and empowered.

Personal coaching and 1:2:1 support

Our professional maternity coaches empower, build confidence and help employees confidently navigate through this transition, giving them a safe space to work through their personal change.

We can also include emotional support through professional counselling if required during this unpredictable time.

Group networking and support

Our group workshops help employees prepare for their parental leave or their return to work, considering what decisions and actions they want to take to make the journey a smooth and fulfilling one.

Working in a group setting allows employees to build their own support network and helps you support new parents at scale.

Why work with Connor?

For over 25 years Connor has been helping organisations to inspire their people and improve the working world. When it comes to parental returner programmes, here are some of the things our clients tell us that set Connor apart from the pack:

We are experts

For the last three decades we've been helping people and organisations to evolve and thrive.

We are experts in supporting individuals and line managers with their resilience and personal change. And because of our heritage in organisation change and HR, we understand how to enable new ways of working through systems, policies, and adapting culture to enable change.

We work end-to-end

At Connor we have hand-selected squads including design experts, facilitators, coaches, and project managers. That means that we can support your organisation from programme design through to delivery, scaling as your needs evolve.

We're also equipped to handle the bigger picture around your returners programme. If there's a gap, we can help or partner with others on org design, role design, supporting internal mentoring and advocates to create the ingredients for success.

We work in partnership with you

Together with you we'll work as one team, building on each other's ideas and creating a flexible, responsive parental returners programme. We identify how hands-on you want to be, you'll always be able to get an update on progress – and we'll always listen when something isn't quite right.

We focus on ROI – return on investment and imagination

We know that measurement, accountability, and results are vital to any project. We'll work with you to identify what these look like at the start of the programme. Sometimes that value is a number – such as reduced hiring and training costs – but it can also be the fulfilment of an objective, such as hitting your D&I commitments. We call this ROI – return on investment and imagination.

Ready to discuss next steps?

We'd love to talk

Talk to us today about how we can support your parental returners to give them a comprehensive and personal experience that helps them to thrive.

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We chose Connor because we felt their values most closely matched ours, they listened to what we wanted and quickly got to grips with our distinctive culture.”

Head of HR, Royal Horticultural Society



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