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HEALTH

WOMEN IN WORK



About Moment Health

Moment Health is all for making Maternal Mental Health mainstream. Founded in 2017, Moment Health is a technology company that aims to prioritise Maternal Mental Health and provide new parents with the tools and knowledge they need to sustain good mental wellbeing – from pregnancy through to parenthood.

For many people, becoming a parent is a wonderful experience. But this huge milestone can also be a challenging one. At any time during the first stages of pregnancy right through to parenthood, as many as 20% of women, and 10% of men, can develop symptoms of depression or anxiety*.

The good news is that early intervention leads to recovery in 80-90% of cases. That's why we've worked with top clinicians to develop a trusted, easy-to-use app that can help sustain good mental health and emotional wellbeing from the get-go.

Research shows that the most productive people in the workforce are women working flexible hours, and more than half of women would use an emotional wellbeing app at work if it was made available to them. Providing support in simple ways is good for staff, good for business.

#makeitmainstream

Introducing our Women In Work Series

In September and October 2017, we ran a survey that centred on women at work and how we are supported during the milestone times in our lives of pregnancy, maternity leave and returning to work after having a baby.

We had an incredible response, and the results from our research have helped to highlight exactly where more support is required, and brought improved clarity to the kinds of systems and services that once implemented could allow women to temporarily step away from the workplace and enjoy time spent with their family with greater ease and care, and then confidently return to their career.

In particular – and even though this is 2018 – there exists an extra pressure for those who suffer mental health. For many, whether their experience is postnatal depression or another mental health condition, there remains a long-standing stigma around mental health and a fear of admitting to it at work. According to a recent report, as many as 15 per cent of employees face repercussions including dismissal, disciplinary action or demotion if they tell their employer about their mental health problem.

On a global scale, the World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that more than 300 million people suffer depression,

which is often coupled with anxiety, at a cost to the global economy of US\$1 trillion a year in 'lost productivity'.

Mental health deserves the same level of care and recognition as physical health, and progressive companies are beginning to make changes in order to address this for their employees. Though things are improving, albeit slowly, for those of us who are experiencing or have experienced a mental health condition, a lot more needs to be done in order to continue the conversation and #makeitmainstream.

The great news is that many of the ways to support mental health are simple, inexpensive and effective. In an introductory letter included in a report on workplace mental health and wellbeing by Deloitte in March 2017, Emma Mamo, who is Head of Workplace Wellbeing for the mental health charity Mind, wrote: "Many of the measures we recommend are small and inexpensive. Regular catch-ups with managers, flexible working hours, promoting work/life balance and encouraging peer support; can make a huge difference to all employees, whether or not they have a mental health problem. But above all, creating a culture where staff feel able to talk openly about mental health at work is the most important part."

I wholeheartedly agree with Virgin Money CEO Jayne-Anne Gadhia, who shared her own personal experience of postnatal depression during a Heads Together event in Newcastle last year, when she spoke of our collective need to bring the conversation around mental health into the open.

Gadhia expressed hope that others in business will help end the stigma, and that people living with mental health problems will seek the help they need from those around them. “Don’t be afraid to ask your friends, family or colleagues for help, and my advice is accept that help with confidence. Take all the help you can get and then tell your story. By talking openly about my own mental health, my hope is that more people in the business world will join in the conversation.”

For all these reasons and more, we look forward to sharing our research findings with you over the coming weeks. As a small insight, when it comes to helping mothers returning to work after having a baby, and in particular supporting those suffering postnatal depression, our survey found that 86 per cent of mothers who had returned to work said they would make use of flexible working arrangements if it was made available to them, while more than half (52 per cent) would use an emotional wellbeing app.

Our aim is to help open up the conversation, improve support services for women, and continue our work in making maternal mental health mainstream. We’re excited to be on this journey with you.

Nuala



Women In Work – Part I

Pregnant Women In Work

— Louise Cheung

Almost half of working pregnant women worry what will happen to their role

A new survey reveals that while most pregnant women feel their employer provides a supportive working environment, 46 per cent are worried about what will happen to their role. The same percentage (46 per cent) agreed that they found being pregnant more emotionally challenging than they expected.

The research was conducted last month (October 2017) by Moment Health, a Belfast-based technology company working to improve maternal mental health services.

Of the survey's participants, 41 per cent of those who were currently pregnant signalled that they would like more support from their workplace, with some indicating adjectives such as 'uninterested', 'callous', 'disappointed' and 'inconvenienced' could be used to describe the attitude of their employer towards their pregnancy.

Professor Vivette Glover, a Professor of Perinatal Psychobiology at Imperial College London, is an international expert on maternal emotional states experienced during pregnancy, and the effects they can have on the development of the child both antenatally and postnatally.

In a recent guest post for the Moment Health website (<https://bit.ly/2HtjYid>), Professor Glover said she would like to see society as a whole doing more to provide emotional support to pregnant women.

"Most people do not know that symptoms of depression are as common during pregnancy, as after giving birth," she writes. "Symptoms of anxiety are very common during pregnancy too."

Professor Glover says employers should be aware of this.

"There is no evidence that work itself is a problem, but if the working environment is such that the pregnant woman feels very stressed, then it may become so."

According to the Maternal Mental Health Alliance, more than one in 10 women develop a mental illness during pregnancy or sometime during the first 12 months after giving birth.

"Anxiety and depression are the most common mental health issues both during pregnancy and after a baby is born," says Professor Jim Dornan, a leading obstetrician and gynaecologist from Ireland. "Women are more likely to suffer PND if they had antenatal depression, but early treatment of the latter can reduce a woman's risk of developing postnatal depression – making early intervention important for effective treatment."

The survey revealed that 44 per cent of women felt their work environment had increased their stress levels, and 41 per cent would like more support for their workplace. To combat this, top suggestions for improving the experience at work while

pregnant included the option of working from home, the provision of a comfortable desk or chair during their pregnancy, flexible working hours and a clearly written maternity policy.

Other services inside and outside the workplace that appealed to new mums included access to private healthcare schemes, counselling support and using an emotional wellbeing app.

Professor Glover also emphasised that supporting pregnant women can positively impact the next generation, too. “If we care better for the emotional state of pregnant women, we will help not only them, but the future generation,” she says. “We all need to look out more for pregnant women, and encourage them to talk to someone if they are having problems.”



Women In Work – Part II

Women On Maternity Leave

— Louise Cheung

Research Shows Almost 40 Per Cent of Women Would Like Regular Updates From Their Workplace While On Maternity Leave

A recent UK survey reveals that more than one-third of women on maternity leave would like to receive regular updates from their employer and stay up to speed with what is happening at their workplace during the time they're at home with their baby.

While the majority of the survey's respondents admitted they were in touch with work on a more informal basis through colleagues, a third of new mothers would appreciate a more formal mechanism for keeping in touch with their workplaces while they're on maternity leave.

The results come at a time when it's estimated that 20 per cent of women experience some degree of perinatal depression or associated anxieties during pregnancy or early parenthood – with social isolation being one of the known risk factors for postnatal depression.

With, according to the survey, almost half of women on maternity leave feeling their employer 'doesn't care at all' about their wellbeing while they're at home with their child

– and roughly the same amount of women admitting they found maternity leave more isolating than they expected – it seems having the need for regular contact with their workplace fulfilled could potentially go some way towards lessening a sense of loneliness for new mums until they return to work.

In a recent article for the website Irish News (<https://bit.ly/2GMuIMB>), Dr Darby Saxbe, as assistant professor at the University of Southern California's psychology department, wrote about the typical struggles new parents experience. "It's common to feel tired, stressed, and short-tempered in early parenthood," Dr Saxbe wrote. "You've got a tiny creature waking you up every few hours, demanding to be held and fed, and your pre-baby life and self are forever changed."

It seems this accurately depicts those early days of parenthood for a large portion of new mums. In the survey, which was conducted by Moment Health earlier this year, more than three quarters of women on maternity leave described their time at home with their baby as 'enjoyable'.

But at the same time, more than 60 per cent almost admitted they found the period 'busy' and 'tiring', with almost 40 per cent adding it's a 'challenging' time. Sixty-five per cent of respondents either strongly or slightly agreed that they found their maternity leave more 'emotionally challenging' than they expected.

"Who wouldn't be overwhelmed," wrote Dr Saxbe. "We often hear about the bliss of welcoming a new baby, but less often

about how exhausting, lonely, and frustrating those first few months can be.”

Alongside regular contact with their employers, those on maternity leave responded positively to other suggested supportive resources: more than a third of women gave a positive response for counselling support, while 49 per cent indicated they would regularly use an emotional wellbeing app, and 52 per cent would appreciate a maternity buddy scheme. Flexible working hours and access to private healthcare were also high on the list of the child both antenatally and postnatally.



Women In Work – Part III

Returning to Work

— Louise Cheung

Flexible Working Hours Are Good For Returning Mothers, Good For Business

Numerous studies prove that women returning to work after having children are an asset to their employers, and a new survey reveals that the benefit of offering a few simple incentives to returning mums may far outweigh any initial outlay or investment.

A recent survey undertaken in Ireland shows that almost two-thirds of employers said they see a boost in productivity when hiring returning mothers, while an Ernst & Young study has found that the most productive people in the workforce are women working flexible hours.

In the UK, it seems slightly more than half of employers have recognised the benefits of flexible working hours and offer it to their staff. According to a new survey conducted by Moment Health, 55 per cent of women who have returned to work indicated that flexible working arrangements are made available to them.

And while almost half of working mothers (45%) described their employer as 'supportive' on their return to work, new

parents overall appear to be struggling more than ever in terms of their overall wellbeing, with more than a third of mothers saying they've experienced mental health issues as a result of parenthood, and 30 per cent stating they felt they have been discriminated against at work.

While in many cases, concerns for women returning to work include experiencing feelings of guilt over leaving their child in the care of another person, and adjusting to the transition from office to the home and back to the office again, it seems most mothers returning to work agree that simple supportive initiatives, such as a 'buddy scheme' and keeping in touch days, would assist them in making the return to work a smooth one that would better benefit their employer and colleagues, as well as themselves.

In the Moment Health survey, 60 per cent of women who have returned to work after having a baby agreed they would like to see simple support solutions in place to help them adjust. Just over two-fifths of respondents said they would like to have access to more flexible working hours, while 13 per cent would like more time to get up to speed with their work once they return. Very few respondents pointed favourably to the idea of more costly or disruptive suggestions, such as a reduced workload (4 per cent), or even a day care on site (2 per cent).

In terms of managing mental health as they transition, 52 per cent of mothers returning to work said they would use an app that would help track their emotional wellbeing, indicating they

would see it as a useful and effective tool during that period of returning to the workforce.

Coupling the incites into how working mothers improve productivity with research showing that companies who have more women leaders are more profitable (<https://bit.ly/2v1LOdj>), suggests the benefits of setting up simple-yet-effective initiatives that work to encourage the return of mothers to work and improve their retention rates are long-reaching and multi-faceted.



About our Survey

Workplace support for mums and mums to-be

In order to understand ways in which workplace and maternity leave experience could have been supported / enhanced by employers, Moment Health commissioned independent research to find out what support mums and mums-to-be are currently receiving / require from their employers during and post pregnancy.

PARTICIPANTS

Almost half of survey participants are currently on maternity leave; one third are back to their workplace and 1/5 are currently pregnant.

More than half (60%) of respondents are between 25 and 34 years old; 35% are between 35 and 44 and less than 5% of participants are between 18 and 24 (3%) and also between 45 and 54 (2%).

The vast majority (93%) of participating women have their place of work based in UK; 4% have it based in Ireland and 2% in other countries.

In summary

More can be done

Whilst there are a lot of positive remarks about employer support and the environment created for pregnant women, those on maternity leave and women returning to work, there is also more employers can do to support mums and mums-to-be. Employers could make all these groups feel more cared for:

Overall almost half (42%) of the whole sample feel that their employer cares 'a little' about their well-being during the period of time they are in, whilst 29% consider their employer cares 'not at all'. Almost half (46%) of women who are on their maternity leave think that their employer 'doesn't care at all' about their well-being.

In summary

The main stages for concern

Pregnant women

Almost half (46%) are worried about what will happen to their role whilst on leave and the same proportion comment on having found being pregnant more emotionally challenging than they expected.

Women on maternity leave

65% of women agreed that they found their maternity leave more emotionally challenging than they expected and almost half (49%) agreed to finding maternity leave more isolating than they expected.

Returned to work

Three quarters (74%) of women returning to work agreed that they have found their return to work particularly challenging. Almost one third (29%) are feeling guilty for leaving a baby with a childminder / daycare and a quarter (24%) are finding it difficult juggling time between work and home.

Groups that would like more support

Pregnant women

41% would like more support from their workplace.

Women on maternity leave

Almost a third (32%) agreed either strongly or slightly agreed that they would have liked a more formal mechanism for keeping in touch during their maternity leave.

Returned to work

60% of women who have returned to work either slightly or strongly agreed that they would like more support to help them adjust.

In summary

Availing of existing initiatives

Whilst initiatives like 'keeping in touch days' and flexible working are available, these are far from available to everyone:

'Keeping in touch days' is what women said is available the most from their employers (46%).

More than half (55%) of women who have returned to work stated that flexible working is available and almost half (46%) of women who are currently pregnant said that flexible working is available to them.

Maternity buddy scheme is the least available option from employers – only 2% of women overall mentioned it and counselling support is available to 9% of women overall. Three quarters (74%) of women returning to work agreed that they have found their return to work particularly challenging. Almost one third (29%) are feeling guilty for leaving a baby with a childminder / daycare and a quarter (24%) are finding it difficult juggling time between work and home.

What specific support would women like?

83% of all women overall would use flexible working if it were made available by their employers.

A quarter (24%) of women who are currently pregnant would like from their employer a clearly written maternity policy.

38% of women who are on maternity leave would like regular updates on what is happening in their workplace.

Almost a third (30%) of women would like full or at least better pay during their maternity leave.

In summary

Interest in more support with well being

Almost half of women (47%) said that they would use an emotional well-being app if it was made available to them. There was a similarly positive response to counselling support (38%) particularly by returners to work and a buddy scheme was particularly welcomed by those on maternity leave (52%).

Almost 6 in 10 women had purchased an app to help track or record their pregnancy

Overall 58% of women in our sample purchased some sort of app to help track or record their pregnancy. More women on maternity leave had purchased apps than those who were pregnant or returned to work.

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