



BT

BT is a large information and communication technology company that has undergone immense changes in the past 25 years. It has moved from being a UK based, male dominated engineering industry with a civil service background to a global company with a much smaller and more diverse workforce working in a wide range of flexible ways.

Dave Wilson is head of the Diversity Portfolio at BT: *"We became an organisation in control of itself. Our leaders had massive foresight and had a vision that we wanted to employ the widest group of people, retain them to work for us and make sure that they could develop. Diversity and inclusion are built into the way we work."*

BT has taken a very comprehensive approach to inclusion and has often been at the forefront of developing ways of identifying and removing barriers to progression. In the 1990s they developed a women's network, undertook equal pay audits built into the pay review process and mainstreamed anti harassment and anti bullying policies. BT became one of the first companies to recognise the particular difficulties faced by carers in balancing work and home life. *"We have worked hard to overcome societal barriers like gender segregation. We have a strong set of values. We are straightforward and recognise that we have to remedy the past. We need to ensure that change is structural and becomes part of core processes."*

BT have developed a wide range of policies to support all staff. They have enhanced maternity and paternity policies. Currently 97% of women return to work following maternity leave. BT are clear that their range of policies has clear benefits to the business. They have developed clear measures of employee attitudes and engagement and know that flexible working is directly related to improved performance.

One aspiration is *straightlining* which aims to ensure that representation of different groups in the workforce is reflected at all levels. This means challenging any glass ceilings and working at different levels of the BT. *"We can now identify where blockages are. We listen to what people are telling us and work to create an environment so that they stay with us and give of their best."*

One area where BT is well ahead of the pack is in the development of homeworking. This has brought employee contentment, customer satisfaction and a reduction in operating costs. *"We are promoting this more and more because it is so productive. Many of our engineers start work at their home and work in their local communities. This has reduced travel time considerably. It also helps support our concern with the environment."*

BT is continuing to challenge difficult issues. One major new area is to promote mental health and wellbeing and overcome workplace stress. The Employees are encouraged to complete a self assessment tool (Stream) which measures stress levels. Managers are mandated to respond and have a tool called Stride to support them. *"The Stream/Stride tools have helped us overcome a major taboo at work around mental health. Yet it makes great sense because many employees will go through highly stressful situations like divorce. This may affect their performance and often they only need some minor changes to reduce their worries."*

In the future BT will continue to challenge some of the big social agendas. They are looking at fathers and the stretch generation where many employees are simultaneously looking after their children and their parents.

Supporting Statement

Organisation: BT

Approximate number of employees: 85,000

Sector: Telecommunications

Brief description of nature of business: Operating in over 170 countries, BT is one of the world's leading providers of communications solutions and services. Our principal activities include networked IT services, local, national and international telecommunications services, and higher-value broadband and internet products and services.

1. Why is your organisation a good place for parents to work today? We are looking for evidence (eg, maternity return rate, men working flexibly, extra support for carers, senior level diversity) as well as any programmes or initiatives which mark you out from your competitors.

We know that BT is a good place for parents to work because our people tell us it is. There are many examples of parents able to use BT's employment practices in order to fulfill all the responsibilities they have, including those as parents and employees. For example, both Keith and Jane work for BT and use the organisation's approach to flexible working and its focus on outcomes achieved, rather than time attended, in order to be able to care for their disabled child. This is just one of many examples of parents using BT's employment practices which also include:

- Enhanced maternity pay
- Enhanced paternity pay
- Enhanced parental leave
- Right to request flexible working available to everyone
- Of new mothers surveyed, the vast majority recognised the BT maternity package as being excellent
- Part time working, term time working, job sharing, etc are all available at BT
- Homeworking and distance working embedded in working practices
- Promotion and advancement is based on merit. For example, promotion into management is reflective of gender split of non-manager workforce.
- Childcare vouchers are available
- Emergency childcare
- Parents have access to advice and support for potential parents, new parents and grandparents

Over 10,000 of our employees are registered homeworkers, with many more thousands having varying work-patterns from occasional homeworking to term time working. It is these flexible working options that allow 97% of our women to return to work after maternity leave.

Research has proved that a flexible workforce takes less time off. Feedback from parents says that BT's approach to flexible working enables them to cope more readily with the normal challenges of being a parent. By enabling people to have greater responsibility about when and where they work, people tell us that this not only increases their performance, it also enables them to meet their day to day responsibilities of being a parent.

Our own statistics show when someone moves to flexible working their performance increases significantly.

2. Please describe up to three milestones, changes or initiatives which helped the organisation become the great place for working parents that it is today.

At BT, we recognise that fairness and reward is key if an organisation is going to be a great place for working parents. That's why, at every annual pay review, we undertake an equal pay review. This review is backed up by budget which is assigned to correct any imbalances that are identified during the review. Our pay review processes include guidance for managers on rewarding employees fairly based on their performance.

Our progress on equal pay to date includes:

- Basing salaries for people promoted within BT on performance and market comparison rather than a percentage of basic salary
- Focusing our pay review on the lower end of our pay scales
- Conducting a pay audit following each pay review

In 2004, BT launched the childcare vouchers scheme with its partner Care4. Under this scheme the first £55 per week of approved childcare paid for under the scheme will be free from both tax and national insurance payments. For a basic rate tax payer this could be worth up to £903 per annum and for a higher rate tax payer up to £1,195 per annum. This scheme has proved to be extremely popular with BT people. Recent figures show that 2,650 people were using the scheme to fund almost £8m worth of childcare. Almost 70% of people using the scheme are dads.

At BT, we recognise that dads are as important a group as mums. That's why in 2004 we introduced enhanced paternity leave terms. On top of the statutory two weeks unpaid leave, we now offer dads an additional two weeks paid leave. Our commitment to fathers is underlined as BT is a founder member of Employers for Fathers.

3. What was the driving force behind these initiative(s)? This might have been, for example, a particular business challenge, internal or external; leadership shown by an individual; employee demand for change, etc.

The driving force behind these initiatives has been to engage more people into employment. Flexible working is the biggest single enabler for this. By creating a robust flexible working structure for our people, they can balance their home lives and their work lives. The statistics have shown that providing flexible working options reduces sick absence, increases productivity, retains our talented workforce, as well as having huge environmental benefits. We also realise that in an ageing society many more of our people will have caring responsibilities. Flexible working allows our people to juggle their work responsibilities, their home responsibilities and, increasingly, their social responsibilities as well.

4. How do you think that your initiative(s) or practice, past or current, have influenced other employers?

BT is seen by other employers as having benchmark policies and practices in many diversity areas. For example, we have recently presented to Carers Australia about our work with Carers UK and government to extend the right to flexible working for carers and our lobbying for eldercare vouchers. Later this year, we will be presenting to carers organisations in New Zealand and India on our policies and our experiences in this field.

We regularly host visiting clients and governments at our buildings to showcase the lived experience of flexible working.

We provide guidance and leadership to many employers regarding flexible working. We have undertaken research to prove the economic, environmental and social case for flexible working, including homeworking and many employers have used this research and our insight and learning from the pragmatic implementation of flexible working to create their own flexible working policies and programmes.

Our Women's Network, along with BT's other nine networks, have been used as models regarding how to create engagement amongst communities of employees. Building on this we are now chair of Employers for Carers and Employers for Fathers in order to influence and understand developments in these areas which we believe will be key as the demographics of the UK and other countries shift over the next decade or so.