



# Diversity Works for London



## Women in London's Economy (WiLE) Case Study

### Maternity Returners Programme



**Accenture** is a global management consulting, technology services and outsourcing company employing 12,000+ people in the UK.

### Rationale

Like many other companies, Accenture relies on attracting and retaining talented and skilled employees. The company was concerned that only 74 per cent of women returning from maternity leave were still with the company a year later and wanted to provide better support. It also wanted to improve representation of women at senior levels and avoid losing female talent by making it easier for women to balance work and caring responsibilities during their careers.

### The approach

The Maternity Returners Programme was based on feedback from employees who were asked what would make a difference. A key part of the approach was the development of pre-maternity workshops open to all women going on maternity leave. These half-day workshops are run internally, with employees who have experience of taking maternity leave acting as facilitators and speakers. The programmes are run quarterly and cover practical issues such as finding childcare, options for flexible working, and discussions about pregnancy and managing problems such as child illness. There is also an opportunity for women to hear directly from others who have returned to work.

Accenture also produce a 'Combining your Career and Parenthood' brochure, given to expectant mothers and fathers. It contains details of company policies on all aspects of parenting including fertility treatment leave, ante-natal care, maternity, paternity, parental leave, and flexible working. The company also has a working parents' website where employees can network with other parents and share helpful tips and information. In addition, the company arranges returners' lunches for mothers returning to work.

### Impact

The number of maternity returners still with the company a year after returning has now risen to 90 per cent. To ensure that all parents are aware of the policies and support available to them, a similar workshop for expectant fathers is now run simultaneously, with joint sessions on childcare options and first aid.

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Niamh McKenna, the senior executive sponsoring the maternity programme and a former attendee herself, is in no doubt about its benefits, commenting that at Accenture it's 'OK to be a parent and still be successful... people discuss their families more openly in the office.'