



Boosting the Met Police's brand as a family friendly employer



Boosting the Met Police's brand as a family friendly employer and increasing diversity and progression of talent, including a particular focus on female representation, empowerment, and retention through the unique 'Met baby' programme.

The Metropolitan Police (Met) is the largest police service in the UK and one of the largest in the world. Because of spotlight the Met is under - protecting the nation's capital, it is often looked to for setting the bar in its sector. This includes its people practices and culture.

By nature of policing, the Met was facing several challenges prior to the introduction of the Met baby programme, however there were two particular catalysts that facilitated an immediate need for support for expectant and new parents.

1. The first catalyst was the desire to tackle ongoing, wider issues not limited to the Met Police, around parental type leave, gender equality, flexible working and diversity and inclusion.

The Met Police wanted to get 'ahead of the game' as a forward thinking and inclusive organisation, by supporting women at key moments in their lives and careers, moving away from the perception that employees starting – or growing – a family is a 'problem to be solved.' They also wanted to help facilitate a wider and much needed change of voice that speaks to every expectant new parent, not just women, from adoption, to surrogacy, same sex couples and fathers.

2. The second catalyst for this programme was the marking of 100 years of women in policing in 2019.

Rachel Billington, HR Diversity & Inclusion Lead at the Met explained,

"A year before the celebration, we had a good hard look at ourselves. We were extremely proud to celebrate 100 years of women at the Met, however when we sat and reviewed female representation within the organisation, it was clear that we needed to do some work to significantly improve this."

As a result, the Met undertook various work streams in HR to understand what they could do to increase female representation. The key work stream that propelled support for expectant and new parents and those growing their family area was prompted by an internal survey with an internal group of working mums, who were asked

about their maternity experience. Rachel continued, "The findings made quite difficult reading and went straight to the top. The decision was made that we really needed to do something to make a change." For example, only 18% of mums said they would recommend the Met as a family friendly employer, and more than half had considered leaving due to during their parental transition.

Results at a glance

- **43%** improvement in the Met being viewed as a family friendly organisation
- **79%** reduction in people feeling their career was adversely affected by their decision to have a family
- **74%** of people are more likely to stay and continue their career at the Met as a result of attending the Met baby workshops
- **27%** reduction in people considering leaving due to poor management during parental transition
- **100%** of participants said they would recommend the programme to others



"Met baby is the single best training & support package I have had in my 17 years in the job."

**Met Baby
Programme Delegate**



The Brief

When asked what the Met was looking to achieve as an organisation, Rachel highlighted the need for support for female officers and staff, especially frontline, explaining, “we wanted to provide support in this world of parenting, to help with flexible working and agility in a front line 24/7 service role. It’s a real challenge compared to other types of roles. Parenting at work has its own challenges for everybody, but I think there is something really acute about an operational, 24/7 environment.”

In seeking support from experts in the market, the Met were looking for partners who would understand their culture and bring a richness of expertise and creativity to helping them achieve their goals.

The programme’s early goals were to specifically support female talent, including:

- Increasing female representation
- Making the Met an attractive place to work for women and more diverse talent
- Increasing promotion of female talent
- Protecting against loss of female talent, as results showed an acute exit point two years after parental return and particularly following a second baby, which couldn’t be ignored

However, as a result of the programme’s growing impact, it now supports the wider ambition of supporting all working parents in the Met. This makes the Met an attractive place to work for all those with or planning a family, tapping into a wider pool of talent.

What we did

Connor were successful in securing the contract to help deliver the programme. This included working alongside other key partners to deliver a holistic parental transition programme including personal and professional development, case management, guidance, resources and support including a tailored app.

Connor led the professional and personal development elements made available to all expectant/new and transitioning parents via the Met baby programme, working closely with the Met Police HR team and advocate groups to design and then deliver a fully tailored support programme, including key elements such as:

- One-to-one transition coaching for parents starting or growing their families.
- ‘Preparation workshop’ for those planning parental leave.
- ‘Returner’ workshop for returning parents.
- Tailored ‘Met baby’ diary to support individuals through their transition.

- KIT / SPLIT day workshops to support confidence, communication, personal sense of identity, resilience, change management, personal and career development.
- Tailored guidance video and resource for line managers.
- Supporting webinars and resources for the app.

What value did Connor add to the organisation?

One of the areas that was particularly valued about the Connor element of this programme was the action learning element and bringing people in a similar situation together at the same time. Coming back from parental type leave can often feel lonely and so the Connor programme provided people with a real sense of support and community.

In addition, going through parental leave during Covid, in particular, and having work move to a largely virtual space proved to make many feel isolated. The programme enabled people to feel connected in a way they wouldn’t have otherwise.

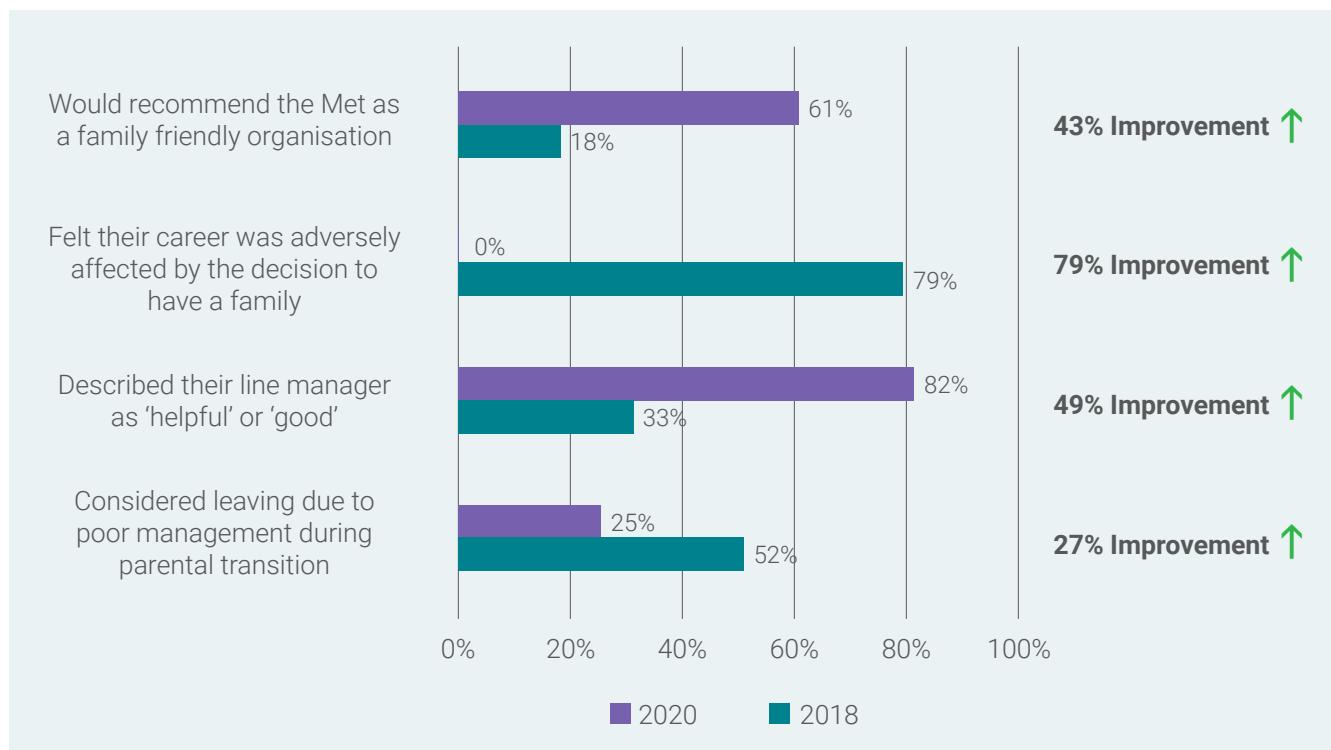
The programme was hugely successful in raising the confidence of those returning to work, not only in their own skills and abilities, but confident that the organisation could also support them. Rachel described this by saying, “you sometimes need to convince police officers, simply because of the very nature of their job, that this is going to work, and this is going to happen. The proof of the pudding is when they experience it and I think there has been a real satisfaction of yes, we really are going to get this support.”

Connor has helped deliver a growth mindset, where some people have never experienced coaching before or been asked about their feelings. Many staff on a day-to-day basis are dealing with the law and so having discussions where you can say how you really feel has helped improve communication and create productive conversations.

By their very nature, the Met Police have had a more hierarchical culture, particularly for police officers with different ranks. Rachel explained, “There have always been challenges to have open and frank conversations to discuss your needs and requirements, or even to perhaps challenge a line manager. The Connor offer has enabled a different type of open conversation between individuals and line managers where it is safe.”



The Business Outcomes



There have been significant cultural shifts in the organisation as a result of the Met baby programme. The programme played a key role on the wider piece around the Met's inclusive culture and how they help people thrive. One part in particular is that pregnancy, adoption and maternity or adoption leave isn't seen as a 'problem' anymore. This programme has provided parents to be and line managers, with the support they need to understand how to best work to support individuals, how to make the parental transition a comforting experience, how to understand the personal challenges and how to see changes in circumstance as an opportunity. The Met baby offer is not gender specific as it also supports same sex couples that might be adopting or becoming parents by way of surrogacy. Parents opting for Shared Parental Leave have also been equally supported through the programme.

The Met baby has been described as being the programme that has helped to 'propel the organisation into a culture of this is what we do around here and the cultural norm.' Prior to the programme, survey results revealed that people felt disconnected, unsupported and like a burden to their line managers. Met baby has increased the confidence of the organisation to support parents that work. This also paid dividends in Covid, where a quick shift to remote working was required and challenged areas where this wasn't possible.

This programme helped begin to tackle additional issues not just limited to the Met. A key outcome was also helping the organisation move further towards gender equality, in terms of parental

support and leave not just being for women. In line with many women's movements to date, there has now been a great shift in the recognition that men have an important part to play in gender equality. Rachel commented, *"It's not just a woman's battle to fight anymore, many men are included in the conversation and are actually calling it out. This isn't just in terms of Met baby but sits as part of the wider piece we have been working towards."*

The Met baby programme helped the Met to become more inclusive not just of gender, but of the parenting experience, extending to support all expectant/new parents from same sex couples to non-biological parents and adoption cases. Providing support in cases where there may be difficulties during pregnancy has also been another way that the fixed idea of what parental transition means and the experience of it has been challenged, recognising that issues are real, unique and affect not just expectant women.

Another real, tangible outcome that has been helped by Met baby is the change to maternity and adoption pay for officers. Because of the overall work the Met has been doing, they have successfully lobbied this at a national level which has culminated this year in improved benefits.

And the work continues, the Met baby programme is now in its second year, with programme attendees feeding back the following:

- **100%** of attendees said they would recommend the workshops and coaching.
- **74%** of people said they were more likely to stay and continue their career at the Met as a result of attending the Met baby workshops.
- Overall quality of delivery on the workshops is **4.8/5**
- **100%** of people said they felt heard, understood and respected by their coach.
- **100%** of people said they worked on and talked about the goals and topics that were of value to them.

Ongoing feedback and impact evaluation being gathered demonstrates the effects on retention, attraction and employee experience in the longer term. And thanks to its ongoing focus on these issues, the Met continues to be at the cutting edge of parental support, not only in its sector but also cross-industry.

What the client said

Rachel shared stakeholder feedback of the Met baby programme, saying, *"The people experiencing pregnancy feel they are supported, queries are dealt with. They have really enjoyed the one-to-one case management, as have their line managers."*

When it comes to the Connor offering, they like the fact that it's different. Many people have not experienced this type of coaching before. They feel it's a particularly credible offer. They get a lot from having a safe space to talk about their issues and like that they are regarded as serious issues to talk about as well. There's something about the investment in people and the moments that matter and that's where we see a difference and in return get loyalty from our people."

Tracy van Dort, Met baby Programme Lead at the Met Police added, *"It's been an absolute pleasure working with Connor. You have come into our unique culture, where possibly in the past we have not always been as receptive to coaching support and provided a truly tailored programme that has seen a very positive uptake."*

You have always adapted quickly to suit our needs, tailoring content of workshops and delivery methods to align with our people, our culture and how we communicate. You are focused on the needs of our organisation and responsive to how and when the programme may need to change to reflect this.

When I've attended workshops, the facilitators are all highly trained, personable and mindful of all kinds of sensitivities relating to their audience and personal conversations/ experiences. I would highly recommend Connor and the work they have carried out with us within the Met baby programme."

Some feedback from Met baby programme delegates:

"I am in my first year of returning after having twins. I found coaching to be an excellent tool, having spent nearly a year on maternity leave. A coach helps you focus on what's important and what will get you through this transitional period. I would advise every mother returning from maternity leave to take up coaching for her sanity if nothing else!"

"The best thing about Met baby is - feeling like I'm actually a valued member of staff - something I did not feel after my previous pregnancies."

"The programme has assisted me with managing a promotion with part time working and work life balance. I'm delivering on all that is expected of me in my new role."

"It was very helpful talking to an experienced coach, who was external to the Met, about my career aspirations and where I see my future. The coaching has helped me to develop a long-term plan and has given me the opportunity to sit down and dedicate some time to think about my career. To anyone thinking about accepting this offer of coaching I would say grasp it with both hands."

"Having children most certainly changes your outlook on life and especially your career. Talking with a professional coach helped relieve me of some of my anxieties about returning to work and plan for a more productive and fulfilling future career."

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

Contact us on **+44 (0)1491 414010**, email info@connor.co.uk or visit our website www.connor.co.uk

