

Equality bill brings maternity coaching to the forefront

By Liz Hall

Maternity coaching looks set to become more widespread as employers gear up to level the playing field for women, in anticipation of the equality bill coming into force in autumn 2010.

The bill will replace a number of other laws, including the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, and it will put a new "equality duty" on public bodies.

Jennifer Liston-Smith, co-founder and coaching and research director of consultancy Managing Maternity, predicted a rise in maternity coaching.

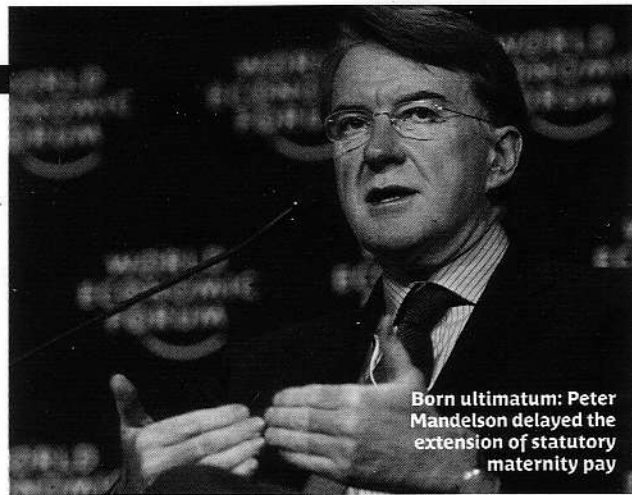
"If the equality bill becomes law, it will affect both the private and public sector, but public-sector bodies in particular will be explicitly required to show they're promoting

equality, including for women," she said.

Managing Maternity has already seen a rise in enquiries about maternity coaching from public-sector organisations and it has just started rolling out a pilot for one government agency. It is delivering a maternity master class to the agency's HR practitioners, as well as group and individual pre- and post-maternity coaching.

Meanwhile, business secretary Peter Mandelson's success in delaying the extension of statutory maternity pay means the onus for early care will continue to fall on women. Liston-Smith, said: "Prolonged periods out of the workplace increase the likelihood of women losing confidence and struggling on their return to work."

Women are taking longer periods of maternity leave, according to Managing



Born ultimatum: Peter Mandelson delayed the extension of statutory maternity pay

World Economic Forum

Maternity's recent benchmarking survey *Managing Maternity 2008/9*, with AXA Icas. The average is now 8.8 months, with longer leave reported in the private sector and larger organisations. In 39 per cent of organisations, average maternity leave is between 10 and 12 months. The report says longer leave has important consequences for organisations looking to enable a successful return, particularly given the economic climate and the pace of workplace change during the maternity leave period.

Managing Maternity already delivers maternity coaching to a range of private-sector clients, including Citi and Kimberly-Clark. Citi recently won a 2009 Opportunity Now

award for innovation for its "Maternity transitions" programme. It offers all women staff a range of maternity-related benefits.

These include a half-day group coaching session during pregnancy, focusing on the transition to motherhood and planning of business during the maternity leave period; and a "keeping in touch day" during the second half of maternity leave. It also offers "Managing the balance" – a half-day group coaching workshop on effective strategic planning and communication – and "Managing the bigger picture" – on work-life balance – as well as an individual telephone coaching to carry forward personal action points.

Henley launches MSc in coaching and behavioural change

By Liz Hall

Henley Business School is introducing an MSc in coaching and behavioural change this autumn.

The programme will emphasise the organisational context for coaching and incorporate an MBA-style management challenge. It is aimed at independent executive coaches, line managers using coaching and managers seeking to build a business-

focused coaching culture in their organisations.

On completion, participants will understand the dynamics of individual, team and organisational coaching relationships; be able to act as coach supervisors; and be able to call on problem-solving skills, which facilitate coaching of senior managers.

The aim is also for participants to grasp the psychological processes

involved in behavioural change and how coaching can support these, as well as broadening and deepening their knowledge and understanding of themselves and others.

The qualification is achieved in three stages: postgraduate certificate, postgraduate diploma in coaching and behavioural change, and MSc in coaching and behavioural change.

KEY STAT

85%

LEVEL OF EMPLOYERS WHO DO NOT PLAN THEIR WORKFORCE REQUIREMENTS MORE THAN THREE YEARS AHEAD

Source: Report by the Boston Consulting Group and European Association for People Management