

Most Times Top 100 employers still fail to make family support visible, as new Parental Fog Index raises the bar on workplace transparency

Most of the UK's leading graduate employers are still failing to clearly communicate how they support working parents and carers, according to the 2026 Parental Fog Index (PFI) published today by Working Families and The Executive Coaching Consultancy (ECC).

Assessing the Times Top 100 Graduate Employers, the Index finds that just 23% achieve the highest transparency ratings — Beacon or Fully Visible. Fewer than a quarter of top employers are therefore meaningfully transparent about the support available to working parents, carers and prospective hires.

At a time of rising childcare costs and growing public commitments to support working families, the findings highlight a widening gap between employer intent and employees' perception. More than a third of organisations show no visible commitment to family support at all, while over half fail to provide enough clarity for candidates and employees to make informed decisions.

A higher bar exposes the gap between intent and reality

The previous full Index in 2024 suggested improving momentum. However, expectations have since shifted, driven by evolving legislation, changing workforce demographics, and greater scrutiny of workplace culture.

In response, the 2026 Index introduces a significantly strengthened framework, reflecting modern family life, including equal parenting, neonatal care, elder care, and critically, evidence of policy uptake in practice.

As a result, many organisations have fallen back in this year's rankings. The report finds that very few employers publish data or signals showing whether family-support policies are actually used. This lack of visible proof creates a credibility gap, particularly for employees making high-stakes decisions about joining, staying, or progressing within an organisation.

Transparency has now entered a new phase. Listing policies is no longer enough, employees increasingly expect evidence that support is accessible, encouraged, and free from career penalty.

A small group is setting the pace

Just nine employers are rated Beacon organisations in 2026, demonstrating consistently high standards of visibility and coherence:

Deloitte, PwC, the Civil Service, NatWest Group, the NHS, KPMG, Teach First, UBS and Clyde & Co.

These organisations stand out not because of sector or scale, but because of prioritisation. In many cases, progress comes not from introducing new benefits, but from clearly and credibly communicating existing support.

Why visibility matters

The Index makes clear that transparency is critical. What employers choose to make visible signals whose choices, and responsibilities are recognised and supported.

In a labour market shaped by skills shortages, evolving rights and rising expectations around flexibility and inclusion, unclear or outdated communication risks excluding talent before a candidate even applies.

The 2026 findings send a stark message: family support that is hidden, incomplete or hard to interpret will be assumed not to exist.

Comment from Working Families

Jane van Zyl, Chief Executive of Working Families, said:

“What this year’s Parental Fog Index shows is a persistent credibility gap between what organisations say they value and what working parents and carers can actually see and rely on.

“It’s no longer enough to list policies or point to good intentions. People want to know whether support is encouraged and embedded in organisational culture so it can be used without fear of career penalty. When that information is missing or unclear, it sends a signal about the lack of understanding or consideration towards those that rely on it.

“The employers leading the way are being transparent about how work and care fit together in practice. At a time when families are under real pressure and employers are competing for talent, making support visible is not a ‘nice to have’, it’s fundamental to fair and sustainable working lives.”

Comment from ECC

Emma Spitz Chief Client Officer at The Executive Coaching Consultancy, said:

“Seven years ago, when we first launched the Parental Fog Index, our goal was simple: make family support visible. By 2024, we believed employers were close to meeting that challenge. But this year’s findings reveal a worrying reversal.

“Right now, public pressure is growing for stronger parental rights, greater flexibility and more affordable childcare, yet many organisations are becoming less transparent, even about core policies such as maternity, paternity and carers’ leave. As dual-career households become the norm and the pressures on working families intensify, there is a widening gap between what employees need to know and what employers are prepared to show. Partial transparency no longer works.

“Our report with Working Families shows that trust is built on clarity. Many employers are doing meaningful work to support parents and carers, but if that support is not visible, employees and prospective employees will assume it does not exist. The organisations leading the way are those making support clear, credible and easy to find because clarity is no longer a communications issue, it is a trust issue.”

About the Parental Fog Index

The 2026 Parental Fog Index is the most comprehensive edition to date, assessing employer transparency against an expanded framework reflecting modern family and caring responsibilities. It is published in formal partnership between Working Families and The Executive Coaching Consultancy.

Read the report

The report is available to download from the [Working Families website](#).