What drives successful organisational cultural change? Putting theory into practice and practice into theory

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Legal rights and organisations' human resource policies with regard to provisions for family-related leave (maternity, paternity and parental leave), rights to request reduced or flexible working and other such measures have improved. Yet, evaluation studies reveal that workers often feel unable to use some of these policies, or incur a career penalty if they do so, because such adjustments run counter to organisational cultural norms and expectations. Often the reluctance is more pronounced for men than women, given widespread gender stereotypical assumptions that care work is women's work. Some organisations are sector leaders in their commitment to driving cultural change in this arena. However, practitioner opportunities to learn from good practice are still patchy rather than systematic. Academic research on advancing gender equality has also identified the importance of organisational cultural change, but there is surprisingly little empirical, or translation, work on how to progress such change.

In our collaboration with Working Families we set out to redress this theory-practice gap of what works, how and why, through a sustained engagement between academics and practitioners in the arena of work-family policy design, implementation and evaluation. Our objectives are to:

- Work with *Working Families* and their organisational members to identify and document examples of sustained cultural change programmes in a range of different organisations and sectors, with a particular focus on actions to support more family-oriented working practice.
- Arrange two practitioner workshops and qualitative interviews with HR professionals from Working Families' member organisations, to foster dialogue and distil their experiences and reflections on what has and has not worked in their family-oriented working initiatives to progress organisational cultural change (with a particular focus around fathers).
- Encourage debate and learning through bringing together the findings from academic research and mutual learning based on good practice examples and reflections on past initiatives.
- Develop, influence and help drive forward organisational cultural change initiatives and programmes and help continue momentum for successful and sustained change in practice.

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