Diversity and Inclusivity in Science
Dr Anna Slater
5th July 2019
I am planning to cover

‘Experiences of researchers taking maternity, paternity, adoption and/or parental leave’
Dr Anna Slater, University of Liverpool and UKRSA

#Vitae17

Two panels by KC Green,
http://gunshowcomic.com/648
A few caveats and a bit of context

YMMV
Your mileage may vary

Used to tell someone that advice may not give them the same results as it gave someone else

What do we want evidence based policy
When do we want it after peer review

I am not an expert but I have watched a number of online tutorials
Experience of researchers taking maternity, paternity, adoption, and/or parental leave

Anna Slater, Katie Wheat, Rebekah Willson

Supporting Synthesis & Self Assembly, York 2019
Who, what, why

‘Experiences of researchers taking maternity, paternity, adoption and/or parental leave’

Dr Anna Slater, University of Liverpool and UKRSA

#Vitae17

PDRA 2010-2013
PDRA 2013-2016
Outgoing co-chair, UKRSA
Design a resource for researchers taking maternity/paternity/adoption/parental leave.
“First-ever national survey of postdocs who are parents reveals a lack of access to paid parental leave, pressures to return to work early and extra stressors for parents of colour.”

Background & related research

Student pregnancy & maternity: Implications for HEIs (ECU)

Quality in Academia & Life (GEW, UCU, SULF)

Parents in the Pipeline: Retaining Postdoctoral Researchers with Families (The Centre for WorkLife Law, UC Hastings & NPA)
http://www.thepregnantscholar.org/Parents-In-the-Pipeline
A postdoc’s guide to pregnancy & maternity leave (NPA)
http://www.nationalpostdoc.org/?page=maternityleave
Who, how

Key questions: what do researchers want to know?
what barriers do researchers experience?
what best practice exists?

Researchers taking leave

Institutions and departments
Methodology

Ethical approval through the UoL Ethics Panel
Online pathfinder survey open from 26/10/16 – 31/03/17
20 questions
362 responses from people based in UK HE Institutions
Demographics

55.7% Academic – researcher
21.9% Academic – lecturer/senior lecturer

47.9% Fixed term contract
35.9% Permanent contract
13.2% Permanent with insecure funding

“My experience of taking leave was overall positive”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Count (Percentage)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>111 (30.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>150 (41.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>55 (15.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>30 (8.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>17 (4.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>1 (0.3%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Barriers

“I will be supported by the institution but I feel I would be left behind in my research.”

“I feel like taking one maternity leave was enough from my boss.”

“work that I had been completing prior to being away being discussed and given away for completion by colleagues without discussion”

“My contract ended one month after my daughter was due / born and so even though I had maternity leave in terms of finance (which was great!) - there was no job security.”

“Do you feel you would be supported to take leave if you needed to in the future?”

- Yes: 275 (75.3%)
- No: 37 (10.1%)
- Don’t know: 51 (14%)
- Prefer not to say: 2 (0.5%)
Barriers

“Did you experience any of the following as barriers to taking this type of leave?”

Themes: **uncertainty** of contract/employment; **financial** issues; reaction from **line manager/colleagues**; **progression** of own research/career; **communication**
“Did you experience any of the following as enablers to taking this type of leave?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enabler</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Line manager</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>26.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job security assurances</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial (i.e. grants to cover leave or employ cover staff)</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisational culture</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I experienced no support</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workload (reduction or help to manage)</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Enablers

“I knew there was a precedent (colleagues had taken successfully leave before)”

“I really appreciated a one-to-one appointment with an HR advisor before going on leave. It wasn't just offered but simply organised for me, and it made me feel supported.”

“I partake in Salary Sacrifice to fund our daycare through the university - this represents an incredible savings and was easy to set up.”

“My Head of School was extremely supportive and listed all the different kinds of help I could ask for without me asking.”
Advice from researchers to researchers

“Every person's situation is different. There are lots of positive stories to draw from, try to establish the support network early and be thankful to those that help you!”

“Ask for what (you) would like as early as possible”

“You can start accumulating childcare vouchers from birth onwards.”

“Take it if you can- it goes so quickly but gives you a unique opportunity to spend with your newborn.”

“You are entitled to accrue holiday at the same rate as any other staff member on your grade.”

“Find childcare as soon as possible – before the child is born!”

“Life is short, research will always be there, don't wait for the best time to have kids as there isn't one.”

“It gets easier. Your time management skills improve 100%, you learn to prioritise much better and you learn what to expend energy worrying about and what not.”
Next Steps

Thematic text analysis: Dr Rebekah Willson and Dr Katie Wheat

Initial results published, with three planned publications:
- Advice for researchers, from researchers
- Best practice policies for institutions to consider
- In-depth look at the survey results

Website?

Please feedback & make suggestions!
Contact details

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- Katie Wheat  Katie.Wheat@vitae.ac.uk
- UKRSA Committee  ukrsavita@uksavitaacuk
Acknowledgements

- Survey respondents – thank you
- UKRSA Committee
- ECU, Royal Society, University of Liverpool
Telling researchers to detect/avoid burnout without acknowledging the sometimes highly problematic working environments and context they are in is not enough.

“"I promote empathy and kindness and community building."

The idea of working towards a **culture of empathy**


The whole conference can be viewed here: [bit.ly/LSTM-EiS](http://bit.ly/LSTM-EiS)
Dr Valentina Abet, Henry Morris, Abbie Scholes, Megan Carr, Dr Chris Jones, Michael Thorne, Robert Pook, Tom Sullivan, Oliver Penrhyn-Lowe, Megan O’Shaughnessy, Ben Greeves, Nicole Lawrence, Mollie Williams, Adam Tollitt

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