

Emerging Diversity and Inclusion: Key Assets – The Children’s Services Provider



Paid parental leave and a policy to support employees affected by domestic and family violence are two of the new ways Key Assets is ensuring its predominantly female staff feel safe, secure and supported at work.

Key Assets is a not-for-profit foster care agency providing family placements for children and young people. The organisation operates from an office in Manukau, supporting carers from Northland to Waikato and the Bay of Plenty, and also has home-based social workers and youth workers in Christchurch.

“Given our employee demographic it is important that we, as an organisation allow our employees to work flexibly, and feel valued, supported and safe within the community and workplace,” says Human Resources Manager Leanne Mills.

Employee feedback through the Staff Wellbeing Survey identified there was growing demand to offer a Paid Parental Leave package, she says.

“We also, in reaction to a growing need within the community, saw a need to develop a policy for our employees affected by domestic and family violence.”

Under the Paid Parental Leave Policy, employees who have completed two years’ of service are eligible to receive an employer-paid benefit of six weeks’ leave, in addition to the 18 weeks’ parental leave offered by the Government. The six weeks can also be taken at half pay over 12 weeks.

“We have also made the commitment that an employee's job will be available to them upon return from leave and that should they need to transfer to a ‘safe’ job during their pregnancy we will accommodate this request wherever possible, with employee's pay and conditions continuing as normal,” Leanne says.

If a safe job is not available, staff can take a period of paid "no safe job" leave for the risk period and be paid at their base rate for ordinary hours during this time.

Key Assets' Employees Affected by Domestic and Family Violence policy formalises the organisation's commitment to ensuring its most vulnerable employees are supported in the workplace. "This was always the case informally, but a formal policy provides further reassurance to our employees," Leanne says.

The policy allows two paid leave days for doctor's appointments, court hearings or to move if needed. Directors have discretion to allow further paid leave as needed.

Both policies were rolled out across New Zealand and Australia at a Leadership Team meeting and Directors were tasked with implementing them within their teams. In New Zealand, the policies were introduced at the monthly staff forum, and any questions were answered. Staff also had the opportunity to speak confidentially with their Manager, Director or HR Manager.

Part of the implementation of the Domestic and Family Violence policy also included the identification of a local Domestic and Family Violence Contact who is able to provide support to team members and flag any concerns directly with HR or senior managers as appropriate.

"It's still very early days, however the new policies and initiatives have been well received," Leanne says.

Knowing their job is secure means staff members can focus on their impending parenthood with less stress, and the ability to be paid for an additional six weeks also helps alleviate financial stress following the arrival of a baby or newly adopted child, she says.

"For those who are affected by domestic or family violence a workplace with a policy is a visible sign of support.

"All of these things will benefit us as an organisation through having a settled workforce who feel secure and safe at work.

"Our Staff Wellbeing Survey in 2016 already showed that 83 per cent of employees are content with how they are treated and believe that Key Assets care about their wellbeing. These initiatives will further strengthen these results in future as employees feel more supported."