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International Longevity Centre UK

Latest news

ILC Friday three

- Reasons for optimism - improving paternity leave
- Vaping and longevity - podcast by ILC Partners, Hymans Robertson
- Register for our Brightwell webinar - The future of ageing in an uncertain world

Reason for optimism - the road to equal parental leave



Headlines were recently grabbed by a stunt organised by The Dad Shift, inspired by a similar action by Pregnant then Screwed in 2023. The purpose of placing baby dolls in slings on statues of men around the country was to highlight that UK paternity leave is the worst in Europe and to call on policy makers to take action. The

Fatherhood Institute has previously published research that found economic output would increase by an extra £23 billion a year (equating to 1% of GDP) if paternity leave was increased to six weeks at full pay. They have been campaigning for an increase to this level, with appropriate policies in place to ensure that more leave is accessible in practice for those on lower wages. We all know that the benefits of improving parental leave for dads go well beyond the economic gains that we can measure in GDP.

There are great examples of employers taking it upon themselves to improve their offer, such as Deloitte, who have equalised paid parental leave for their staff. The wider context here is that statutory leave is less accessible to employees on lower incomes, meaning the lowest-paid fathers are less likely to take any leave at all. Previous research by the Fatherhood Institute has found that over 80% of fathers who earn £60,000 or more take their meagre two weeks of paternity leave; whereas only 25% of fathers earning £20,000 or less take this statutory two weeks.

Among those lending their voice to this campaign are Future Men, a charity focusing on the health and opportunities of men and boys (and our neighbours in the Foundry building). They provide support and information through various programmes such as Future Dads, a parenting course designed specifically to inform and support fathers, which they shared with us at an ILC team meeting last week.

As crucial as fatherhood courses (and the social networks they create) are to parents and future generations, we need to give fathers the time and opportunity to use what they have learned. In many ways mothers are still seen and treated as the default parent. A more equal distribution of time and labour would support better experiences and outcomes for families. Here at ILC, we are optimistic about the opportunities that more equal parenting might bring to the workforce, the economy, and to gender equality in all its forms across the UK.

In the current context of demographic shift, declining birth rates, and too many people being priced out of parenthood, we have need a national conversation what working parents should expect moving forward. We need to address how we should balance the responsibilities of work and home life, that accounts for and then goes beyond economic indicators: how do we want to raise our children, and who will be tasked with this? How do we better support fathers who wish to be more present and involved? What needs to change to make this possible and accessible for families of all income brackets?

Although this baby carrier stunt could be just that, it should also hopefully spark a wider debate about the future of parenthood, work, and family in the UK that is long overdue.

Do you have a reason for optimism that you think we should share? Tell us about it via the button below:

REASONS FOR OPTIMISM

Podcast episode on vaping and what it means for longer lives

HYMANS ROBERTSON

Podcast episode: 'Understanding Longevity – Vapes'

As part of their 'Hymans Robertson on...' series, independent pensions company and ILC partner has produced this insightful podcast episode on vaping and what it means for our longer lives. They set out the evidence we currently have on the risks of vaping compared to smoking tobacco, and the risks that each pose to population health.

Some fascinating insights come out of this podcast episode - if 99% of current tobacco smokers started smoking before the age of 19, what does this mean for the Smoke Free Generation? And could we reach a stage where new interventions are brought out to help people quit vaping, as vaping was for smoking?

While ILC's work on preventative health has focused primarily on government policy over the past few years, this discussion focuses on how industries and companies can respond to new legislation, policy change, and new social trends that impact our health and wellbeing.

Vaping is in many ways a key example of health communication gone wrong, which can leave companies and individuals in the lurch when they are trying to make safe and healthier choices. A 2015 report from Public Health England reported "expert estimates" that electronic cigarettes are 95% safer than smoking. Nearly a decade on, there is growing evidence that vaping is certainly not risk-free and could have a variety of negative health effects, particularly for young people who are not using it as a tool to quit smoking. This number travelled around the world and influenced policymaking in several countries, and was subsequently found to be baseless and not rooted in evidence.

International responses to the issue have varied. Now in response to growing evidence around the risks of vaping, some governments such as Australia and Colombia have banned vaping outright; the US federal government developed a task force to address the illegal production and sale of vapes. UK legislation to limit the flavours and attractive packaging of vape products will not come into force until 2027 at the earliest. While vaping is a visible and potentially complex issue across different countries, the takeaway is that a prevention-first agenda is crucial for individuals, industries, governments, and societies.

This podcast series 'Understanding Longevity' addresses a range of topics that may be of interest to readers of Friday Three, including longevity inequalities and the impact of COVID-19, and how industry must take stock and respond to changing evidence and social trends.

LISTEN HERE

Webinar on the future of ageing in an uncertain world



Over the past six months ILC has been working with Brightwell on a futures-focused project that makes some predictions for technology, healthcare, pensions, and social connections as we live longer in the coming decades. By 2040, 63p in every £1 will be spent by over-50s households. To make the most of the longevity dividend that is available, businesses and service providers will need to adapt. We are compiling a report that we will launch at this webinar on **Tuesday 22 October** to set out the opportunities that longer lives will present to employers and industries.

Confirmed speakers include **Nausicaa Delfas**, CEO of The Pensions Regulator; and **Professor Alexander Evans OBE** from the London School of Economics and ILC trustee.

This week we brought this project to a high-level breakfast debate alongside the Labour Party Conference. The objective was to develop some solutions and gather insights from a range of experts working on topics aligned to longevity. We shared our guide to service providers which sets out the demographic context that they are likely to be operating in a few years from now. Who are their customers? How old are they; where do they live; how is their health; how long are they working and earning? Longevity and our response to it will affect all these questions, and set the scene for businesses, who can get ahead if they respond effectively.

We want to reframe longevity as the missing sixth mission for government - and as an issue that businesses and industries cannot afford to ignore.

To register for our webinar launch of the report, and to view the report once it is available, please use the button below.

REGISTER HERE

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