The Met Baby Programme
Contributed by the Metropolitan Police Service
Following the results of the 2018 parental survey and in support of the 100 years of women in policing campaign, the MPS acknowledged that it needed to improve the support offered to expectant and new/existing parents. During late 2019, the MPS launched the Met Baby Programme in partnership with three external partners, allowing for a holistic support service for expectant and new parents and also their line managers. The Programme consists of 1:1 HR advice, transitional coaching and development workshops that can be used as keep in touch (KIT) days. The Programme also offers support and advice for those who have suffered a miscarriage or stillborn and guidance for the line manager during difficult conversations. The Met Baby App underpins all Met Baby activity through e.g. allowing new parents to book onto workshops, access a return to work checklist and FAQ’s. It also extends to include useful information and signposting to other support services such as Tommy’s and our very own Met Families Advocacy.

The reputation of the Programme has gone from strength to strength over the past year and although it was originally forecasted for an overall take up of approximately 1200 expectant/new parents and their line managers, there are almost 1700 parents/line managers currently engaged with the Programme. Feedback has been extremely positive with services being regularly reviewed to ensure accuracy, relevancy and also value for money. The recent evaluation results (2020) show a vast improvement with regards to the MPS being regarded as a family friendly organisation (risen from 39% to 82%). The number of new parents looking to exit the organisation due to parental related issues has reduced by 50%. Line managers are now described as helpful or good by 82% of respondents compared to 33% in 2018.

Whilst the Programme has been a great success story for the MPS, it must not be underestimated how much time and money has been invested into what could be viewed as a cultural change. Some individuals have been skeptical about why the MPS has invested this level of support and budget into this particular audience, although the combination of internal and external support and presentation of the Programme at relevant events has helped to overcome this. The opportunity to engage with a neutral party through the provision of external coaching has created an environment where concerns can be discussed in private and away from the workplace/the line manager. It has been important to avoid complacency with the content of aspects of the service as each parental transition brings its own set of challenges and has often required a tailored and unique support experience – the Met Baby Programme has been successful in achieving this thus far.