

Family Friendly Employment Employer's Toolkit

Encouraging a better
work-life balance

Employment policies you
can implement to recruit
and retain parents and
carers in Westminster



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ON BEHALF OF:



City of Westminster

Introduction

This toolkit highlights good practice in family friendly employment policy. Its purpose is to introduce you to policies that can help you attract the best new staff, make the most of your talented workforce, improve staff wellbeing and reduce staff turnover. It also showcases employers who are already demonstrating initiatives in this field to inspire you.

The policies introduced below are already working successfully for leading employers and we want to encourage you to introduce similar ones to provide better opportunities for parents and carers living in Westminster. These policies can be implemented for all staff across your organisation, helping your employees balance their working life with demands outside of work.

They are relevant to all sizes of organisation, in all sectors.

A checklist is provided at the end of this document so you can carry out a self-assessment on your family friendly policies.

The Case for Action

The proportion of the working population who have caring responsibilities is growing, and they have the potential to be a valuable resource to businesses. However lack of flexibility and the cost of childcare can prevent parents and carers from returning to or staying in work.

- The **average cost of full time nursery** (50 hours per week) for children under 2 is £284 a week in London or over £14,000 a year¹.
- **42% of lone parents** in London are out of work².
- **40% of mothers** in couples in London are workless, compared to 27% outside the city³.
- The proportion of quality flexible jobs across the UK is **lowest in London at 7.2%**⁴.
- A full range of family friendly benefits means working parents are **80% more likely** to stay with their employer⁵.

We often consider people with caring responsibilities to be parents, but employees are increasingly responsible for other family members such as their parents and grandparents. This is an issue that relates to both men and women. While women are still more likely to be primary care givers in a family, 62% of fathers believe that men should spend more time caring for their children⁶. Frequently offering these policies will benefit not just parents and carers, but all your staff.

As an employer you are able to attract and retain this growing pool of labour. You can select the most relevant policies to ensure that your employees are able to balance their professional and personal lives.

¹ Childminder and nursery costs from Family and Childcare Trust, 2015

² <http://www.cpag.org.uk/sites/default/files/CPAG-Poverty152-Hard-work-parental-employment-in-London-Autumn2015.pdf>

³ <http://www.cpag.org.uk/sites/default/files/CPAG-Poverty152-Hard-work-parental-employment-in-London-Autumn2015.pdf>

⁴ http://timewise.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Timewise_Flexible_Index_2016.pdf

⁵ Rutgers University study (<https://www.myfamilycare.co.uk>)

⁶ <http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/886/>

⁷ www.childcarevouchers.co.uk

Working
parents
make up over
1/3 of the UK
workforce⁷





“The aim of the flexible working policy is to enable The Crown Estate to attract and retain skilled employees... [and help] individuals to better balance work and other commitments”

The Crown Estate,
Flexible Working Policy

The Business Case

Businesses need to operate efficiently and productively to survive, so the policies detailed here support this. The evidence for gains to business is clear:

- In a multi-national survey 83% of those companies that had adopted flexible working had seen increases in productivity, while 61% had seen an upturn in profit⁸.
- Boston College showed a range of gains to businesses from offering workplace flexibility including: enhanced recruitment and a wider talent pool; reduced staff turnover; greater engagement and commitment, higher customer satisfaction, increased job satisfaction, increased cost savings and profits, a high return on investment within the private sector, and a reduction in absenteeism and presenteeism (attending work when unwell)⁹.
- Homeworking can be hugely valuable to its business. BT estimates that every individual who works in this way saves £6,000 per year in corporate costs¹⁰.
- The average cost of replacing an employee has been estimated at £30,614, with the largest part of this relating to lost productivity as the worker learns the role¹¹.
- Offering family friendly policies helps you retain staff, reduce turnover and hiring costs. BT found that offering this option saw the proportion of those returning to work after maternity leave climb to 96-99%, saving the company around £1m per year in recruitment and induction costs alone¹².
- Offering and advertising family friendly policies attracts candidates who otherwise would not have applied. Attracting the right staff is likely to become increasingly difficult for those employers that do not offer work flexibility. 78% of those looking for work believe family friendly policy is important, while 54% of all workers saw flexibility as an important reason why they took their job¹³.
- Employees in their mid-twenties are twice as likely to view flexibility positively compared to those in their fifties, meaning organisations seeking to attract new talent will need to prioritise this¹⁴.
- Family friendly employment facilitates a more diverse workforce, which often benefits businesses. For organisations targeting customers who are parents or carers, employing parents can give greater insight and understanding of the customer group.
- A third of all vacancies across Westminster were considered hard-to-fill, equating to 5,993 roles¹⁵. Offering policies which attract parents and carers and help them return to work, could give employers access to a larger talent pool to potentially fill these roles.
- A 2014 UK government overview of cost/benefit evidence shows that “the majority of businesses believe implementing flexible working arrangements is unproblematic and incurs very few costs”¹⁶.
- The specific cost per flexibility request was estimated by BIS in 2010 as £241, a small amount to spend to gain all of the benefits detailed here.

⁸ <http://www.cipd.co.uk/pm/peoplemanagement/b/weblog/archive/2016/02/09/flexible-working-boosts-profits-and-productivity-say-majority-of-employers.aspx>

⁹ http://workplaceflexibility.bc.edu/need/need_employers_coverage

¹⁰ <http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/886/>

¹¹ <http://www.hrreview.co.uk/hr-news/recruitment/it-costs-over-30k-to-replace-a-staff-member/50677>

¹² <http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/886/>

¹³ <http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/886/>

¹⁴ <http://www.hrreview.co.uk/hr-news/strategy-news/flexible-working-does-actually-boost-productivity-new-survey-finds/61206>

¹⁵ UKCES, 2013 Employer Skills Survey

¹⁶ http://www.psi.org.uk/site/project_detail/costs_and_benefits_to_business_of_adopting_work_life_balance_working_practice



Approaches and Initiatives

There are a variety of measures you can implement over and above your statutory employer responsibilities that can help to provide better opportunities for parents and carers living in Westminster. These are outlined in 6 sections below.

1 Company Culture, Communication and ‘Open Door’ HR Policy

Encourage a culture of openness, from the top down

Family friendly employment practices will be easier to implement if an understanding of the advantages of these is embedded in the culture of the company. When senior managers and line managers are aware of the benefits of flexible working to both the business and the employee, they are able to confidently promote practices and encourage employees to use them. There is less likely to be discrimination against those requesting flexible working and a more open environment in which to make those requests.

Communicate internally

Visible signposting using familiar methods of communications ensures that employees clearly understand company policies and their own eligibility for them, and feel that you support them as parents and carers. Communications could be through the company intranet, email newsletters, and leaflets or in person for staff without regular access to computers.

Royal Opera House

The Royal Opera House employs approximately 1,000 people across a broad spectrum of professions. There is a variety of work styles and patterns across these professions but the central belief across the board is one of support.

The Royal Opera House operates a fair and consistent approach to flexible working requests with the requirements of each job dictating the response. Successful requests are often granted on a six month trial basis. Their ‘open door’ HR policy combined with an HR-led approach to flexible working requests ensures that all requests are considered within the same framework, and are based on previous decisions made.

The Royal Opera House Benevolent Fund supports employees during their employment and beyond. The Royal Opera House Benevolent Fund provides

confidential advice, emotional support and financial assistance to those past and present employees and their dependants of the Royal Opera House and Birmingham Royal Ballet who need help¹⁷.

“The Royal Opera House Benevolent Fund provides confidential advice, emotional support and financial assistance to those past and present employees and their dependants of the Royal Opera House and Birmingham Royal Ballet who need help”

¹⁷ <http://www.roh.org.uk/about/benevolent-fund>

St. Martin in the Fields

Open environment

As a small company of just 130 employees with a core age group between 20 and 35, working at St. Martin in the Fields 'feels like family'. With this approach, the company understands that being a family friendly employer is one of the best ways to retain talent.

St. Martin in the Fields realises that an individual's circumstances can change. Whilst staff realise that not every flexible working request can be met, they know they can voice any requests and are actively

encouraged to do so. Each request is considered on its own merits and attempts are always made to meet them, within the requirements of the business case. Very often, hours are agreed with line managers at the beginning of employment and written into a contract. On a more informal basis, there are systems in place that allow people to take time off to attend things such as doctor's or dentist's appointments.

Promote an open and honest environment

By opening discussions on issues such as flexible working, employees will be more aware of company policies and will feel more comfortable making requests. Open discussion engages staff, builds trust and can promote the understanding that each request will be considered on an individual basis. Consulting staff who will, or may, be affected by policies in future is good practice to ensure they have their interests heard.

Encourage communication between line managers and employees

To be successful, flexible working requires trust, good management and good communication. Employees can help this process by managing expectations and keeping their managers informed of their whereabouts, particularly before working at home or alternative locations. If line managers communicate clearly with their employees, employees will understand what is expected of them in return.

Develop business-relevant policies

Initiatives are most effective when they are both people-driven and business-focused. You can engage with staff to understand what the issues are that specifically affect them so that initiatives are relevant and useful to your workforce. This way, you can go beyond introducing initiatives purely for compliance purposes or to match competitor peers.

Train your line managers

Training your line managers to respond to flexible working requests and your work-life balance policies will ensure they are better placed to support their staff. It will also provide consistency in approach across your organisation, ensuring that all staff receive the same treatment. Consideration can also be given to training line managers and employees on flexible working and HR policy at the same time. This allows both parties to fully understand what is expected of each of them and provides a more holistic and comprehensive approach. Setting up company-specific training and information resources either online or in paper format will enable ongoing training and support line managers to consult and implement them.



2 Advertising and Reputation

Promote openness to flexibility and your family friendly policies in job advertisements

Many employers offer a wide range of family friendly policies, but do not include details of these when advertising roles. Advertising your approach to flexible working and other policies attracts a larger talent pool and makes the job more accessible to candidates. It encourages them to be upfront about their caring commitments from the outset.

Use logos and join campaigns to demonstrate your approach

The 'Happy to Talk' logo is a simple way to alert candidates to a willingness to engage in conversation without commitment. It is promoted by Working Families. Visit www.workingfamilies.org.uk for more information.

You can join campaigns such as Hire Me My Way www.hiremyway.org.uk which aims to increase the number of flexible roles available.

Advertise on targeted websites

You can advertise any of your jobs which are available as part-time or a job-share roles on targeted websites:

www.timewisejobs.co.uk

www.shareyourjob.com

www.recruiters.workingmums.co.uk

Build a reputation

Establishing a strong reputation as a family friendly employer will happen over time. This will enable you to attract the most talented employees and retain staff that you've invested in. Having strong policies, and implementing these well is the starting point. Engaging in promotional activities to publicise your employment flexibility in trade journals, corporate media, social media and other mechanisms will also support this. Consider applying for awards run by various family-focused organisations or the national press on the best employers.

You can also gain accreditation Family Friendly UK Accreditation scheme run by the Family and Childcare Trust, which enables you to demonstrate your approach to your staff and customers.

3 Flexible Working

Allow and promote different types of flexible working

Flexible working is the foundation of excellent family friendly employment policy as it allows employees to balance a professional life with the caring duties they have outside work.

All employees have the legal right to request flexible working once they have worked for the same employer for 26 weeks. There are additional policies you can offer over and above this.

There are business benefits of offering roles as part time:

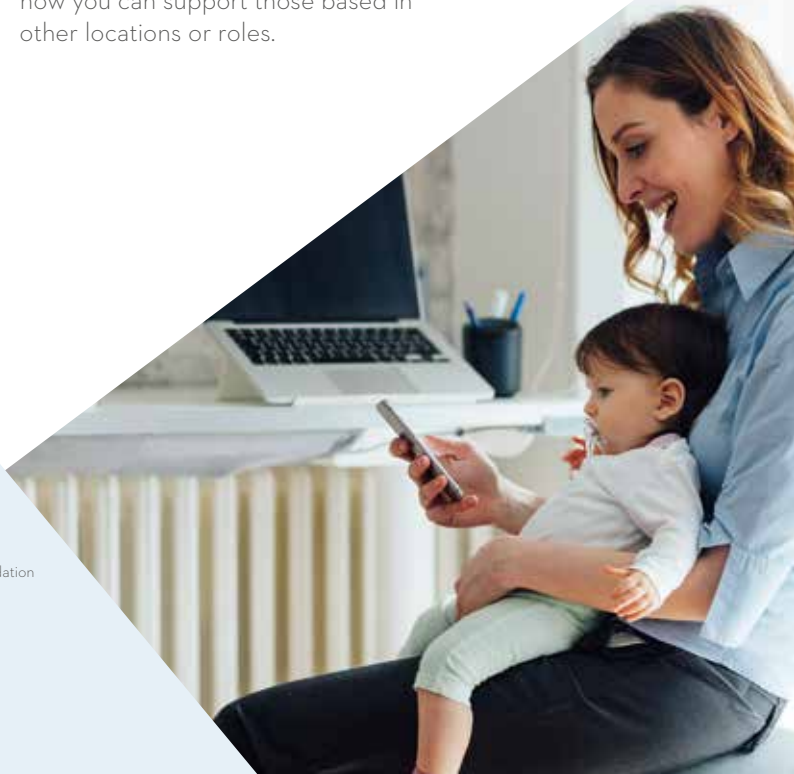
- Acquire experienced talent at an affordable cost;
- Recruit for hard to fill/niche roles; and
- Realise cost efficiencies by more precisely matching tasks to appropriate skills/salary levels¹⁸.

There are several approaches to the implementation and management of flexible working. In some cases allowing line managers to assess the individual's situation whilst also considering the needs of the team and the business. In other cases, flexible working is led by HR, which encourages consistency across departments and creates company-wide precedence and protocol.

Flexible working arrangements can be formal or informal. Formal flexible working arrangements allow employees to make a permanent or long-term change to their working hours. Informal flexible working arrangements allow employees flexibility on a more ad-hoc basis, for example, flexi-time.

You may already have policies in place for your office-based staff, but also consider how you can support those based in other locations or roles.

¹⁸ Building a sustainable quality part-time recruitment market; 2014; Joseph Rowntree Foundation





Exhibition Road Cultural Group

As a small charity, funding is limited for the Exhibition Road Cultural Group. For Executive Director Emily the driver to offering part time opportunities is to get “the experience you need at the price you can afford. Offering roles part-time has enabled us to attract more experienced, specialist staff who can really make an impact. It gives us many of the

benefits of a bigger team – different voices and perspectives – but on a very tight budget.”

This approach has also enabled them to attract the best staff as “being able to work four days per week was a real incentive for one team member moving into the cultural sector from the private sector”.

Types of flexible working

Compressed/condensed hours

Employees can work their contracted hours but in a shortened timeframe. For example, they can work full time hours as 4 day weeks or 9 day fortnights.

Part-time working

Roles can be offered as part time with hours to suit the business need and employee – with shorter hours worked each day (e.g. to allow for nursery drop-off and pick-up or to care for relatives), or fewer days worked.

Term-time working

Employees can remain on a permanent contract but can take paid/unpaid leave during school holidays; or work additional hours during term-time and reduced hours during school holidays to ensure they work their contracted hours over the course of the year.

Job sharing

The responsibilities of one job can be shared amongst two or more employees, so you gain expertise from more than just one person and have full time cover for the job, and your staff members have access to part time roles.

Career breaks

These allow employees to take time off work for various reasons, with the comfort of having a job to return to.

Flexi-time

Flexi-time allows staff to build up hours in the event of needing to take time off at a later date.

Home/remote working

On an informal basis, this allows an employee to work from home or at least closer to home if they have any problems regarding care cover.

On a more formal basis, employees may choose to work from home for a set number of days to perhaps make it easier for them to take a child to nursery or school, for example.

Job design

Designing a job to meet the needs of a specific candidate from the outset can help them to thrive in it.

This can be led by HR professionals who will look at the tasks that need to be undertaken in a specific team and apportion them in accordance with skills and availability.

Design can include elements of all the flexibilities described above.

Allow employees to propose their own flexible working solutions

Flexible working works well when it is tailored to an individual, and suits both them and the business. Their needs around flexible working are likely to change over time as their circumstances shift. Having an open discussion and reviewing flexible working arrangements is a way to make sure it works for both parties.

Offer guaranteed hours and early notice of shifts

Whilst flexible working is very important for parents, guaranteeing set hours each week with fixed shifts or good notice of shifts (e.g. providing rotas a month in advance), is also vital. This allows parents to make childcare arrangements in advance, and make a commitment to childcare such as nursery which generally cannot be booked on an ad-hoc and short notice basis. It enables staff to manage their financial commitments, knowing they have a fixed income. This approach also provides continuity for the business, who will have certainty their shifts are covered each week.

In addition to fixed shifts, additional shifts can be offered to employees on a voluntary basis.

Working hours could be offered within suitable time periods that accommodate for parents/that are convenient for parents.

The Abbey Centre

Almost half of The Abbey Centre's staff work flexibly. For Chief Executive Lainya their approach is just "not about being a cuddly friendly employer" because "in ruthless business terms we have gained as a business".

Offering flexible working has "helped us to retain staff, and so save the cost to re-recruit and risk of getting someone not right for the role. Too often employers see flexible working as a risk of what they are giving, not what they are gaining."

Staff are managed on their performance against clear objectives - not the hours they are at their desk.

Their Head of Finance and Business Nicola, explains that working condensed hours and working from home is vital to her, as "that one day is the difference between being able to work and not being able to work."

Tate

Tate's flexible rota enables front of house team members to plan childcare and other commitments weeks in advance. Every 12 weeks employees submit their working hour preferences for future rotas. This can include condensed hours at times,

then much reduced hours - for example during school holidays, as long as contracted hours are worked during the rota period. If operational requirements are met, all requests will be accepted.

The Nickelodeon Store

Store Director Clare "doesn't believe in zero hour contracts". Therefore, all staff are recruited on a permanent basis, with fixed shifts. This enables staff to arrange childcare and other plans, knowing their working patterns and income will be consistent each week.

Their reason for this is that "as a business, you know the hours you trade and the hours you need staff. It is much easier to manage with fixed shifts and you can feel confident that you have your shifts covered."

Their approach benefits their businesses because it attracts a wider workforce. "We want a mixed workforce, of different ages. You get the best out of your team when everyone learns from each other and brings different skills. I'm here to run a business and take money, but I need the right people in the right place and the way we operate supports that."

4 Employee Benefits

Complementary to a comprehensive flexible working package, employers can also offer a selection of benefits to attract and retain parents and carers.

Types of employment benefits

Parental/Maternity/Paternity Entitlements

Enhanced Leave and Pay

An enhanced parental leave package is anything over and above statutory allowances. It can include additional pay or additional time off.

Businesses can also offer incentives for parents to return to work following the parental leave (e.g. offering enhanced packages for those returning, or offering an additional payment once parents have been back at work for a period of time).

Childcare Vouchers

Businesses can offer childcare vouchers as salary sacrifice schemes at parents and guardians. They allow employees to pay for childcare from their pre-tax and National Insurance (NI) salary, which can save them around £1,000 a year and financially support their return to work.

Establishing a voucher scheme can save the business money through reduced NI payments. Employers can establish their own scheme or use one of the many companies who can administer the voucher.

The childcare voucher scheme is due to close to new entrants in April 2018 and be replaced by the Government-run Tax-Free Childcare.

Keeping in Touch (KIT) Days

Employees can work and be paid for up to 10 days during their parental leave – these are optional for both the employer and employee. KIT days allow employees to remain part of the team and keep up to date with any developments in the business, without losing any maternity pay.

Emergency Leave

Offering additional days on top of an employee's leave allowance to cover emergencies provides parents and carers with the assurance that should they need to take a day off from work because of circumstances out of their control, their employment is not compromised. These can be offered as unpaid or paid.

Back Up Care

Back up care is a provision for care when usual arrangements break down or where there are last-minute changes (e.g. when the person usually carrying out childcare is sick). It helps staff to attend work as normal, and works best when it is provided flexibly and with minimal booking requirements. It is organised and paid for by an employer.

Staff Networks

Network groups, such as Parents' Network or Carers' Network encourage employees to discuss common workplace issues with others in a similar situation, share ideas and raise awareness of particular issues within the organisation, with the ultimate aim of improving working life. These are a key tool for you to consult with parents and carers to ensure your policies meet their needs.

Holiday Clubs and Activities

Larger employers could offer childcare clubs and activities for employees' children during school holidays free of charge or at low cost. This reduces the cost of childcare and can also support staff interaction and morale.

On-site Childcare

Whilst more challenging in central London locations, some employers offer nursery facilities on site at subsidised rates.

McDonald's

One example of a flexible working initiative is McDonald's Family and Friends Contract. This initiative allows employees from the same family (or a group of friends) to share or cover each other's shifts, so long as they work in the same restaurant. The initiative gives employees freedom and in doing so, increases job satisfaction and

employee engagement. It also allows employees to manage their caring responsibilities.

The business case for this initiative points towards increased efficiency, retention of a skilled workforce and reduced recruitment costs¹⁹.

My Family Care

Care Provision

My Family Care provides support to a business' working parents and carers. It consists of an online portal providing employees from their members not only with a wealth of information and advice but also with several tangible benefits. Parents can

search for and book nannies, nurseries and childminders for emergency childcare with as little as 30 minutes' notice. A set number of sessions can be funded by the employer. They also organise back up care, be it for children or elderly relatives, and school holiday cover.

5 Know your statutory responsibilities

Ensure that you have good knowledge of your responsibilities as an employer both during pregnancy, and for parents and carers, to ensure that you meet these alongside implementing any of the additional policies covered in this paper. Your key responsibilities include:

- The right to request flexible working, by all employees who have worked for you for 26 weeks or more.
- Statutory maternity leave and pay.
- Paid time off for antenatal care for pregnant employees (including antenatal or parenting classes if recommended by a doctor or midwife).
- Unpaid time off work for two antenatal appointments for the father or pregnant woman's partner.
- Protection against unfair treatment, discrimination or dismissal.
- Shared parental leave and pay.
- Adoption leave and pay.
- Paternity leave and pay.
- Unpaid parental leave.

6 Recruit locally

Working locally means that staff can more easily balance work with their caring responsibilities. By having a reduced travel time to and from work, childcare requirements and costs can be reduced for your staff supporting their work-life balance. In return, you have more local staff who are less likely to experience travel difficulties and this can help you network into your local community, bringing soft benefits including an upturn in perception of the business.

Support can be provided for employers to recruit locally via Cross River Partnership's Recruit London initiative, by contacting Sylvia Kankasa at sylviakankasa@crossriverpartnership.org or **07931 546 865**.

¹⁹ (http://www.efa.org.uk/data/files/Good_practice/mcdonalds_flexible_working.pdf)





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