

# Flexible hiring: guidance for employers

## 1 Why have flexible jobs?

Nearly 9 in 10 UK employees either work flexibly already or wish they could. Many of them will *only* apply for a job where this is possible.<sup>1</sup> Yet only 11% of jobs with salaries of £20K+ FTE are advertised as being open to flexible working options.<sup>2</sup>

Too few jobs are being advertised as suitable for flexible working, restricting the talent pool from which employers can recruit. Being able to offer a job on a flexible basis increases the talent pool, helps retain staff and saves on sickness absence. Start from the position that most jobs have some flexibility in them and use the following guidance to think through how a role can be done flexibly from the start.

### How will flexible hiring help your business?

- **Attract extra candidates:** If you don't offer flexible working at the point of hire, you are cutting yourself off from the large proportion of candidates who won't apply for traditional full-time jobs.
- **Progress your best people:** Flexible hiring will also improve mobility within your business – enabling talented employees who work flexibly to apply for promotion, taking their flexibility with them.
- **Skills utilisation:** Flexible hiring will ultimately help you build the best team, optimising performance and productivity.
- **Diversity and the gender pay gap:** Worrying about these relatively new inclusion issues? Flexible hiring will go a long way to solving them.
- **Employer brand:** Flexible working has become a key employee benefit in recent years – second only to salary. Promoting your openness to flex will help make your organisation a place where people are keen to come and work.

## 2 Getting started: finding flexibility in every job

### Consider the type of job and its activities

Employers find that there is some flexibility in most roles, whether they are in retail, office-based work, site work or have employees who are out and about. So, start by assessing:

- Time – How many hours are needed to carry out the job: is this a full-time role, a more than full-time role or a part-time one?
- Location – Where do the activities need to be carried out?
- When – What activities have to be done when?

<sup>1</sup> Timewise The Talent Imperative 2017

<sup>2</sup> Timewise Flexible Jobs Index 2018

### Then consider the role's dependencies

**Team jobs:** Does the job involve working as part of a team with demanding short-term service delivery constraints? If so, some flexibility will be possible, but it will need to take account of service cover requirements and be negotiated as a team so that there is always cover and everyone's needs are met.

**Project-based:** If the work is more project-based, with long-term deadlines and less reliance on other team members, a relatively autonomous form of flexibility will be suitable. This could be occasional or regular homeworking.

**Supervisory job:** A supervisory job may require day-to-day guidance and troubleshooting by the employee. If full-time cover is needed, then consider job-sharing or use it as an opportunity for someone else to deputise. Much supervisory work at senior level is already done remotely – especially if the job is a global one or covers more than one site.

**Client-facing/public relations:** Is this an outward-facing job, with a lot of time devoted to external contacts? Day-to-day flexibility could be a distinct advantage in this job, with report writing completed in transit or catching up from home.

**Process-driven work:** Is a lot of processing and analysis required? Are there peak times that require extra cover? Annual hours or flexibility tailored to the business cycle could work well. Would quiet space, free from interruptions make these tasks suited to occasional homeworking? Might there be any confidentiality issues to overcome?

### Finally, write your flexible job description

Once these questions have been considered, you should understand what the role or roles you're recruiting for and the types of flexible working options you will consider (the most common arrangements are covered in the next section). At this point, you're ready to finalise your job description(s).

## 3 Write your job advert

When offering flexible working in a job advert, it's important to put the message across in a way that is honest, positive and clear. And make sure it's positioned in a place candidates will notice it – usually together with other benefits such as bonus, pension, holidays etc.

It is best to be specific about the types of flexible working options you will consider for each job. Some of the most common arrangements are:

- Home working or working in another location, some or all of the time
- Part-time: a reduced working day or week, or working during term-time only
- Annualised hours: An employee's hours are expressed as a total number of hours to be worked during the course of the year. The hours actually worked are likely to fluctuate from week to week and from month to month.
- Shifts: fixed or flexible
- Compressed hours: full-time hours condensed into a shorter week, e.g. working full-time hours in four days, or a nine-day fortnight
- Job share: job split/shared between (usually) two people
- Core hours with flexible start and finish times

#### 4 So, your job can be done flexibly – how to use the *Happy to Talk Flexible Working* strapline and logo

Once your recruitment process is ready, the final step is to tell candidates that you'll consider hiring flexibly by using *Happy to Talk Flexible Working* in your job adverts, on your careers website and through any recruitment agencies you use. Simply [download the Happy to Talk Flexible Working strapline and logo](#) and use it beside your job advert and on accompanying materials.

Consider where you want to advertise your roles. To attract the widest audience, it may be a good idea to include jobsites that specialise in flexible roles, such as [Timewise Jobs](#) and [Working Mums](#).

##### **Do**

- Prominently display the strapline and logo, showing clearly that the job being advertised is available to those wanting to work flexibly. If it isn't possible to display the logo, simply use the strapline *Happy to Talk Flexible Working*.
- Make sure that you include the types of flexibility available in the job, and any flexible options you have as standard: for example, if you have a flexi-time scheme, say so. This is often something that candidates find very attractive, but it isn't always mentioned.
- Be practical – it may not be practical to list all the types of flexibility in the job advert. Include the main type(s) of flexibility in the advert, and then give full information in the job description. You might also specify what is **not** possible for the job.

##### **Don't**

- Don't use the strapline and logo if you're not open to flexible working in the job being advertised; it will lead to frustration and perceptions of unfairness.
- Don't use the strapline and logo as a blanket organisational statement. It should be used on a job by job basis, to avoid candidates wasting their time and yours by applying for unsuitable jobs.

For further information and advice, please go to:

##### **[www.workingfamilies.org.uk](http://www.workingfamilies.org.uk)**

Working Families is the UK's work life balance organisation. We have over forty years' experience of helping organisations develop an agile, flexible and family friendly approach to work that maximises engagement, wellbeing and on-going high performance – the key to business success.

Our business support team works with employers to develop tailor-made solutions for flexible working and better work-life balance. We help employers develop an inclusive, high-performing workforce, fit for the future.

##### **[www.timewise.co.uk](http://www.timewise.co.uk)**

Timewise is the UK's flexible working specialist. Run by a team of innovative thinkers and opinion formers, we support employers to design flexible solutions that attract, retain and develop the best talent. From conducting research and creating programmes for change, to delivering market leading training and consultancy, we're on a mission to make flex the new normal. We also help match flexible hirers and candidates through our bespoke jobs board, Timewise Jobs. [www.timewisejobs.co.uk](http://www.timewisejobs.co.uk)

The Flexible Working Task Force, which is co-chaired by the CIPD and Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, was set up to help increase the availability and uptake of flexible working across the economy. Its members include:

Acas • Age UK • Carers UK • CIPD • Confederation of British Industry • Chartered Management Institute • Department of Health and Social Care • Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy • Department for Work and Pensions • Equality and Human Rights Commission • Federation of Small Businesses • Government Equalities Office • HM Treasury • Timewise Foundation • Trades Union Congress • Working Families