

# **FLEXIBLE HIRING: A GUIDE FOR EMPLOYERS**

Ideas and action points to prepare organisations for the Flexible Working Act 2023 and the right to request flexible working from Day One of Employment

# Introduction

The Flexible Working Act 2023 comes into effect on 6<sup>th</sup> April 2024 and with it brings a new right to request flexible working from Day One of Employment.

The new legislation means employees will be able to make a statutory request to make permanent changes to their contract from their first day of employment. This means that from day one, they can ask an employer for changes to how long, when and where they work.

This places greater importance on the need for flexible hiring – offering flexibility from the first day of employment.

This guide will support you to understand how you can implement flexible hiring in your business, why the time is now to do so and how you can benefit from offering roles with more flexibility.

We've created this Guide to help you and put structures and processes in place to deliver future-fit workplaces.

You can help offer flex **from day one**.

- Introduction
- What is flexible hiring?
- How will flexible hiring help your business?
- Why is flexible hiring so important to the workforce?
- The four stages of flexible hiring
- How to offer flexible working options in job-adverts
- How to develop your flexible hiring message
- Further information and support

# What is flexible hiring?

Flexible hiring means offering flexibility from day one of a new hire. If you can see that flexible working is beneficial to your business, and is working well for your people, then you're missing a trick if you don't hire flexibly. Without this final step, there's a block in the jobs market for people who can't work full-time; so your business is missing out on some of the best candidates, and not fully benefiting from its flexible working strategy.

Starting to hire flexibly is a much simpler step than you might think. What's more, saying in a job advert that you'll consider flexible working does not commit you to meeting a specific request. It simply means that, if a candidate requests flexibility, you will consider it and agree to the arrangement if it works for the role.

You may have some roles where you really cannot see any opportunities for flexibility. If so, make sure you are clear with candidates about the expectations of the role and how it's worked. But it's our belief that, when you really look at them, there are very few roles that can't be worked flexibly in some way.

Flexible hiring is when an employer openly offers flexible working to new recruits, at the point of hire

# How will flexible hiring help your business?

## Attract extra candidates

If you don't offer flexible working at the point of hire, your organisation is cutting itself off from the large proportion of candidates who won't apply for traditional full-time jobs.

## Progress your best people

Flexible hiring and hybrid working will 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

Is your organisation worrying about how to close the gap? Flexible hiring will go a long way towards solving them.

## Employer brand

Flexible working has become a key employee benefit. Promoting your openness to flexible working will help make your organisation a place where people are keen to come and work.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Sources include: Flexibility Works 2021:- <https://www.flexibilityworks.org/research/> CIPD Flex From 1st Flex From 1st | Campaigns | CIPD

# Why is flexible hiring so important for the workforce?

- Even pre-pandemic nearly 9 in 10 UK employees wanted to work flexibly<sup>2</sup>. Many of them will ONLY apply for a job where flexibility or hybrid working is possible.
- They are competing for a handful of vacancies. We know that only 3 in 10 jobs advertised in the UK offer any kind of flexible working<sup>2</sup>. This lack of flexibly advertised jobs is a clear barrier to fair flex for all; with 70% of jobs off-limits for those who need to work flexibly, opportunities for work or progression are scarce<sup>3</sup>.
- This mismatch of supply and demand means that 1.5 million people are trapped in flexible jobs they're over-qualified for<sup>4</sup>. They have traded salary for flexibility, and employers are missing out on their skills.
- What's more, with 49% of people saying they would consider taking advantage of the new day one right to request<sup>5</sup>, the appetite for flexible working is greater than ever.

Would you consider taking advantage of the new day one right to request if you applied for a new role?

**49%**  
YES

**30%**  
NOT SURE

**21%**  
NO

- Of those there was a relatively even split between genders (48% of men and 51% of women) and an increasing number of younger workers considering flexibility – 57% of 18–34-year-olds.

<sup>2</sup> Flexible Working: a Talent Imperative, Timewise, 2017

<sup>3</sup> Timewise Flexible Jobs Index, Timewise, 2023

<sup>4</sup> How Flexible Hiring Could Improve Business Performance & Living Standards, Timewise for J Rowntree Foundation, 2016

<sup>5</sup> A Question of Time, Timewise 2023

# FOUR STAGES TO BECOMING A FLEXIBLE HIRER

## Stage four

Communicate it in your job adverts



## Stage three

Build it into the recruitment process



## Stage two

Gain leadership buy-in to flexible hiring



## Stage one

Check you're comfortable with flexible working



The rest of this guide takes you through the four stages of flexible hiring, with ideas and action points to move you on your journey

# Stage 1:

## Check you're comfortable with flexible working

Before you can begin to hire flexibly, there needs to be wide acceptance of flexible working throughout your organisation, and experience of seeing it work well in practice. You have to believe that flexible working is good for your team, and good for business.

If flexible working is still something that's granted reluctantly, with flexible workers not being properly supported, then your organisation has work to do before you can begin to think about hiring flexibly.

Even if you have a proactive flexible or hybrid working strategy, you may feel that there are still parts of your business where flexible working practice can be improved. It may be, for example, that flex is seen to be a problem at very senior levels, or in a particular department.

### Ideas for action

- If you're still in the early stages of accepting flexible working, read up on its many benefits including talent retention, motivation and loyalty, real estate savings, productivity levels, reduced levels of absence.
- Identify where you have blocks to flexible working and examine why.
- Identify areas of your business where flexible working is particularly successful and carry the learning across.
- Identify successful people who work flexibly in your business and promote them as role models.
- Articulate clearly in your internal communication what your approach is. This may require you to develop guidance and a set of positive behaviours in addition to your flexible working policy.

### Timewise can help

- We can supply case studies from other employers, describing changes they made and how they implemented them.
- Further guidance can be found here:

[Timewise Flexible Jobs Index 2023](#)

# Stage 2:

## Gain leadership buy-in to flexible hiring

To drive change and begin offering flexible working from day one of a new hire, promoting this in job adverts, you will need to ensure your organisation is fully supportive from the top down. A shift towards flexible hiring will involve line managers as well as your HR / Talent Team, and leadership engagement is key to getting buy-in from everyone.

If becoming a flexible hirer is not yet on your leadership agenda, you will need to present the business case to them. It will be important to define clearly how it can support talent attraction and career progression of current flexible employees, maintaining a diverse talent pipeline; and how the failure to hire flexibly creates a sticking point in fully realising all the business benefits of flexible and hybrid working.

### Ideas for action

- Run a leadership workshop with your executive team, exploring their aspirations for flexible working in your organisation.
- Secure an internal senior champion for the changes, who will promote the benefits of flexible hiring internally.
- Ask a senior leader to write a blog about how flexible workers should not be afraid to apply for promotion within the business.
- Identify employees who were hired on a flexible basis and have proved successful in their roles. Present them as case studies to your executive team.
- Consider what flexibility is possible for ALL roles (there is always a way to offer more input and control even in frontline roles)
- Ensure flexible working is a feature of your diversity and inclusion plans; additionally, it should be built into wellbeing strategies.



# Stage 3:

## Build flexible hiring into the recruitment process

The change is simply that, as a business, you are saying you are open to flexible working requests from new candidates, as well as for existing employees. As with existing employees, stating that you are 'open' to flexible working does not commit you to granting a specific request from a candidate.

The change may be simple, but it needs to be embedded in your recruitment processes before you can begin to offer it to candidates. There needs to be a job design step where you ask the question 'can this role be worked flexibly?' Managers need to think about when, where and in how much time the job can be done.

Managers also need guidance on how and when to respond to requests for flexibility during the application and interview phase. At the end of the first interview? At offer negotiation? Whenever a candidate raises it?

### Ideas for action

- Perhaps start with one department, ideally where there's already an appetite for offering flexibility at the point of hire. Get the changes working there before rolling out.
- Develop guidance for managers on how to think through when and where a job needs to be done, and whether it can be done in fewer than full-time hours.
- Develop guidance for your recruitment team to prompt line managers to consider flexibility for each new vacancy.
- Develop guidance on how and when to respond to candidate requests for flexibility.
- Better still, encourage managers to pro-actively introduce the conversation about flexibility as part of the interview process.

### Timewise can help

- We offer Flexible Hiring Workshops for Managers and Talent Attraction teams
- Get in touch to find out more: [info@timewise.co.uk](mailto:info@timewise.co.uk)

# Stage 4:

## Communicate your openness to flex in your job adverts

Once your recruitment process is ready, the final step is to tell candidates that you'll consider hiring flexibly - in your job adverts, on your careers website and through any recruitment agencies you use.

Developing a company-wide 'blanket' flexibility message is a good idea, as it will save time for recruitment teams. But be careful to include this only in job adverts where it has been agreed that flexibility is possible, to avoid misleading candidates.

And try to be specific about the types of flexible working that are possible for a role. A simple sentence saying you're 'open to flexible working options' is often regarded with scepticism by candidates – especially those seeking reduced hours. It's much more helpful to define the types of flexibility that you will consider. These options can still be worked into a 'blanket' sentence or two (you'll find examples on the next page), but they will have more credibility.

### Ideas for action

- Test the waters within one department, to help embed the recruitment processes developed at stage 3.
- Develop a short paragraph that reflects your approach to flexible hiring, to include in your recruitment advertising.
- Job adverts need to be transparent as possible about which forms of flexible working are possible for the role.
- Build your message into your career website. Tell the stories of candidates you have hired in flexibly or provide quotes from them.
- Remember to talk to your recruiters. They need to know they can put forward candidates who are seeking flexibility – they won't, unless they're in the loop.

### How to write your flexibility message

Read on for examples of how to advertise flexibility in your job adverts. Also questions to ask yourself, to help form your statement.

## Further information and support

- Further help on *Timewise - Are you Ready for Day One Flex*
- CIPD Flex Working info *Information on Flexible Working | CIPD*
- Government guidance - <https://helptogrow.campaign.gov.uk/flexible-working/>
- Timewise Flexible Jobs Index 2023  
<https://timewise.co.uk/article/flexible-jobs-index/>
- Timewise A Question of Time Research 2023 - *A Question of Time: What's happening with part time?*

Get in touch: [info@timewise.co.uk](mailto:info@timewise.co.uk)

**timewise**

[timewise.co.uk](https://timewise.co.uk)  
[info@timewise.co.uk](mailto:info@timewise.co.uk)  
020 7633 4444

 @Timewise  
 @Timewise\_UK