
Family friendly working practices are good for business

The majority of employees want flexibility at work to enable them to balance their work and other commitments such as caring for a child or an elderly parent.

As well as increased staff motivation and engagement, there are significant business benefits to adopting family friendly working policies.

- In 2013, 22 per cent of vacancies remained unfilled because employers failed to find suitable recruits. In a survey of managers by the CIPD in 2012, 75 per cent said that flexible working practices had a positive impact on employee retention and 65 per cent said it improved recruitment.
- The UK's maternal employment rate is currently just under 70 per cent, but a quarter of women do not return to work after having a child. The IPPR estimates that increasing maternal employment to just under 75 per cent would benefit the economy by £750 million.
- Employee absence can amount to a considerable cost for employers. In 2013, it increased to an average of 7.6 days per employee per year. In 2012, 56 per cent of organisations surveyed by the CIPD believed that flexible working reduced absence.
- Flexible working can help organisations respond to changing customer demands. In 2012 a survey by the Institute of Leadership and Management showed that 64 per cent of managers who used flexible working agreed that it enabled the workforce to match operational needs, and 62 per cent said customer needs were better met through extended working hours.
- In 2013, there were 1.1 million people over the age of 65 in the workforce. Flexible working is essential to enable this rapid extension to working life, and to meeting the needs of ever diverse age groups in the modern workplace.
- With business premises – particularly in our cities – at a premium, and transport costs rising every year, many businesses use flexible working practices to reduce overheads such as office rental or transport for meetings.

What employees think

New research by Family and Childcare Trust and Netmums found:

- A third of employees feel there is stigma or resentment from work colleagues around flexible working.
- While 80 per cent think it is very important that a potential employer offers flexible working practices when they look for a new job, for 15 per cent of respondents flexible working is not available to anybody at their workplace, and nearly 20 per cent don't know if flexible working is available.
- Some 53 per cent of respondents had not pursued promotion due to the conflicting demands of work and family life, 22 per cent had taken a pay cut or demotion, 29 per cent had left a job not to work and 25 per cent had changed their job for a more flexible position elsewhere.

Top tips

- Include flexible working in your recruitment policy to attract the best talent.
- Lead by example with senior buy-in of flexible working practices.
- There are few real barriers to flexible working, and many different ways flexible working can be applied. While part-time and home working has increased, often other forms of flexible working – such as job share or annualised hours – are overlooked.
- Share the full range of options with employees, and make the application process easy to understand.
- Measure the impact of flexible working on your organisation, looking at outputs, staff absenteeism, staff retention, and reduced premises costs, where applicable.

About the Family and Childcare Trust



The Family and Childcare Trust works to make the UK a better place for families. Our vision is of a society where government, business and communities do all they can to support every family to thrive. Through our research, campaigning and practical support we are creating a more family friendly UK.