



30 June 2014

Making Work Work for All... A Working Families Briefing Paper on the extension of the Right to Request Flexible Working to all eligible employees

Introduction

Many member employers of Working Families have for a number of years offered the right to request flexible working to all their employees and with very positive business results. The business benefits to employers are widely documented in terms of reduced absenteeism and sickness, increased productivity and improved recruitment and retention.

The main beneficiaries of the extension of the Right to Request Flexible Working on 30 June 2014 are those people who want to work flexibly for reasons other than a caring responsibility. Whatever the reason, individuals who want to find the right work-life fit for themselves will now find it easier to combine working and outside interests and commitments.

This briefing sets out a number of case studies of employees already working flexibly and a short history of how we got where we are today.

“We should celebrate this change in legislation as a huge step forward in making work work for all”



Making Work Work for All

Individuals all have their own reasons for wanting to work flexibly, for some it will be to start a new business or to study for further qualifications, whilst for others they may have changing family circumstances and want or need more time at home. The case studies here show how a variety of people have effectively used flexible working arrangements to make significant changes to their lives.



Making Work Work for New Businesses

I am a self-employed Massage Therapist and work from my home practice Opal Holistic Massage in Bournemouth. I completed my massage training in 2013 during the evenings whilst working a 9 to 5 office role. Once I had qualified, I chose to open my massage practice weekday daytimes which would enable me to spend my free time on other projects with my partner who works during the day.

In order to make this possible, I found an alternative office role working Monday to Friday evenings. This role gives me the freedom to build up my massage practice, without the pressures of my new business needing to fund my existing financial commitments.

I really appreciate the flexible working pattern my employer is offering as I now have the best of all worlds; the stability of a regular income, time to develop my own business doing what I love and my weekends free to enjoy time with my partner, friends and family.

Rebecca Christie, ITEC, MFHT, Opal Holistic Massage, Bournemouth

Making Work Work for Grandparents

It has been great since the company agreed for me to work part-time, now I am able to look after my grandson all day Monday and Wednesday and Thursday afternoons. By working flexibly I have given my daughter a chance to start work full time as a Social Worker and I have the pleasure of enjoying quality time with only grandson rather than him spending ten hours five days a week in the nursery. I was unable to do this with my two children when they were young, it is still the same company and I was working full time but now I feel grateful the company is ready to listen and understand the challenges being a grandmother entitles.



Josune Arzalluz

Making Work Work for Health and Fitness

Many people would imagine that working for a car rental company would mean a lot of rigidity in their schedule. Often our branch locations open early in the mornings to allow our customers to pick cars up before they continue with their busy day and our airport locations are usually open late to serve customers disembarking from their evening flights. In fact, this type of schedule can often lend itself to more flexibility for our teams, allowing them to fit their other commitments in alongside their work schedules. I have worked for Enterprise for eight years now and in that time have seen many people change their working hours to fit around their home commitments, such as caring for





their young children. I have always been impressed by the flexibility Enterprise provides its employees when it comes to an alternative work arrangement but had thought it never really applied to me.

When my colleague, who finishes work earlier than me, approached me to join her at a fitness boot camp, I initially felt I wouldn't be able to sign up due to its start time. However, after approaching my manager, I was able to apply for an alternative work arrangement which meant that I could flex my break times and finish half an hour earlier in the evenings to allow me to be able to sign up for the class. I am glad to say that I have been attending boot camp now for six months, four times a week. It has helped me make some lasting positive changes to my wellbeing, not to mention my work/life balance.

Nicola Sansom, Enterprise Rent-A-Car

Making Work Work for Personal Development



I have been an administrator for an arts charity for nearly three years now. In July 2013, I was accepted onto a Masters degree programme, and was thrilled that my employer was willing to let me go part time and recruit for somebody to share my role. I was clearly good at my job, and was working hard, so it wouldn't have made sense for me to have left. Sharing my job with another person means that not only am I able to keep up my work within the company, but that also the company benefits from the knowledge and skill sets of two people. After our initial meeting about my arrangements to go part time, my boss did quip that my studies themselves might be useful in the workplace, though I've yet to discuss my dissertation topic in our weekly meetings.....

Other knock-on effects included boosted confidence: to know that my employer valued me as a member of the team made me feel more self-assured in my work; and increased happiness in general: working Monday, Tuesday and Friday, I never feel worn down by the grind on a Friday afternoon.

Susannah Jones, arts charity administrator

Making Work Work for Retirement

I am using flexible working to enable me to do two things really, I'm semi-retired and don't want to work five days a week 52 weeks a year any more, and as I have a daughter with Down's Syndrome, I like to do pro-bono work for the Down's Syndrome Association (DSA).

I've just finished a full time commitment as a "traditional" contractor, then I was able to take (at my own choice) four weeks off, during which time I had a holiday and did some work for the DSA. I'm returning to work soon and they'll let me work three to five days per week and up to two days a week at home. This is a three month assignment which suits me to a "T" as I can still keep my mind active. Whilst some folk like to just stop working overnight at 55, I felt I wanted to keep working, but not at the pace I used to.





In terms of impact on my job, I do the work I want to do not have to do, this time I had a choice between two roles and went for the option which my experience was aligned better to. I do not see myself as having an "upwardly mobile" career though - but that doesn't drive me any more.

As my clients are varied I choose those who are more receptive to flexible working as ultimately those clients get the best out of me.

Graeme Card BSc. FCIPS MCMI

Making Work Work for Employers



Employers benefit too. Extending flexibility to all employees makes business sense, as it allows improved recruitment, better retention and gains wellbeing and employee engagement that in turn boost performance and productivity. Savvy employers, large and small, know this and have been reaping the benefits.

Lloyds Banking Group was the first employer to introduce flexible working arrangements for all employees over 15 years ago. As the way in which our colleagues live their lives continues to change, flexible working has become an essential part of the way we do business.

Fiona Cannon OBE, Group Director, Diversity and Inclusion, Lloyds Banking Group



Making Work Work for Medium Sized Employers

Flexible working liberates people to live the lives they want to lead, and they respect and value their employer for the trust that has been given to them, whilst other organizations want their employees to earn that trust. Another benefit is attracting high quality employees. Our business has been able to recruit some of the best people in our industry because of the inflexibility of previous employers.

Grant Taylor, Managing Director, Peridot Partner



The Right to Request Flexible Working for all has arrived. But how did we get here?

1970 Equal Pay Act – equal pay for equal work

1975 UK Sex Discrimination Act outlaws discriminating against a person because of their gender. The Employment Protection Act gives limited maternity rights to women

1976 Pam Walton returned full time to her job as a senior professional role for a water authority after three months maternity leave. After a year she tried to negotiate a job share, but her employers were unwilling to try out this highly unusual practice. Reluctantly Pam left but her experiences fired her commitment to flexible working and she went on to be a founder member of New Ways to Work

In **1978** Working Families legal adviser Cathy Rogan was born. Her mother was entitled to 6 weeks maternity pay at 90% of earnings, and 11 weeks antenatal and 29 weeks postnatal leave. She had to have worked for her employer for two years to have the right to return to her job

1987 Education Secretary Kenneth Baker supports job sharing to encourage more women to return to teaching

1981 Fox's Biscuits: Stanley Oldham, managing director introduced job sharing for school leavers. Sheffield City Council: Roy Pilkington, assistant education officer introduced job sharing to the education service

1988 CBI warns of impending demographic time bomb – an aging workforce and a smaller pool of new employees. Attracting and retaining working mothers becomes increasingly important.

1988 Gemini Recruitment, the first job share agency, launched in Essex by June Saltmarsh and Fiona Elphick.

1990 BBC Radio Woman's Hour and the Department of Employment spearhead a nationwide campaign, 'Back to the Future', to encourage women with family commitments back to work

Midland Bank launches workplace nurseries programme. Boots Retail Division and British Telecom launch job share schemes.

1995 Employment Select Committee Report on Mothers In Employment

Technology starts to have a significant impact in changing how and where work is done. Increasingly flexible working is seen as making 'business sense' and linked into employee engagement and heightened performance. More and more the conversation around work life balance includes men and carers, as well as mothers.

1999 Employment Relations Act implements parental leave, and enhances maternity leave.

1999 Lloyds TSB launches Work Options scheme – first employer programme to enable every employee to request flexible working on a business neutral basis.

2002 Employment Act introduces paid paternity leave of 2 weeks and a new right to request flexible working for fathers and mothers, implemented April 2003.

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2006 Work and Families Act extends maternity leave to a year and pay from six to nine months, and extends the Right to Request to carers of adults (implemented April 2007). Provision is made for the future introduction of Additional Paternity Leave, transferable by the mother to the father.

2007, whilst carrying out research on flexible working, Pam Walton interviews two women job sharing a job at Yorkshire Water at a similar senior level to the one she had to leave over 30 years ago.

2008 The Walsh Review considers flexible working in the UK and recommends that the Right to Request flexible working is extended to cover the older to Request. Enhanced rights for fathers to take leave are also recommended.

Research by Working Families and Cranfield School of Management in **2008**¹, reveals that the majority of employees who were working flexibly (71%) were doing so informally (65%) rather than using formal policy procedures.

2013 Right to Request Flexible Working extended to all employees



For further information on the issues covered by this briefing, please contact:

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The code of practice in handling in a reasonable manner requests to work flexibly can be found [here](#) and guidance on handling requests can be found [here](#) at acas.org.uk

The Working Families pocket guides *A Flexible Future: Making it work for you!* and *Leading high performing flexible teams* can be found at www.workingfamilies.org.uk. Should you require hard copies of these publications please contact Working Families.

About Working Families Working Families is the UK's leading work-life organisation. The charity supports and gives a voice to working parents and carers, whilst also helping employers create workplaces which encourage work-life balance for everyone. The Working Families helpline for parents, carers and their advisers gives advice on employment rights and benefits. Call **0300 012 012** or e-mail advice@workingfamilies.org.uk www.workingfamilies.org.uk The helpline is supported by the Big Lottery Fund.

ⁱ Flexible Working and Performance, Cranfield School of Management and Working Families, 2008