

Briefing paper:

Proposing a motion to support flexible working for local councils



Background

Over the 2022-23 financial year the number of people leaving the workforce due to caring responsibilities rose for the first time in four decades.ⁱ The [2023 Working Families Index](#) found that over half of UK parents on lower incomes have had to reduce their working hours in order to manage their childcare needs, while four in ten had gone into debt to pay for childcare.

As the cost-of-living rises, more needs to be done to support parents with childcare and to reduce the barriers to work that confront parents, carers and people with disabilities or ill-health.

Flexible working arrangements such as flexitime, staggered hours, term-time working and job shares, can support parents balance work and caring commitments, and can be a vital lifeline enabling others to access or stay in work.

While the pandemic has changed working practices for some, lower-income and site-based workers are less likely to have access to flexibility. Despite a high demand for flexible working, with nine in ten people reporting to want to work flexibly, only three in ten jobs are advertised with flexibility.ⁱⁱ

This is why we are asking local government to find ways to encourage employers to design jobs with flexible options by default, and advertise them as such.

We also believe that local government can lead by example, by adopting the below motion to show that flexible working is no longer just a 'nice-to-have', it's good for people and good for business – boosting productivity, employee engagement, and staff retention.ⁱⁱⁱ By adopting the below motion councils can demonstrate that they are supporting flexible working by taking an inclusive approach to job design and recruitment.

Working Families, with the support of the Government's Flexible Working Taskforce, have developed the [Happy To Talk Flexible Working strapline and logo](#) to support employers on their journey to designing more flexible roles.

We would be delighted to discuss the below motion with you further and explore how we can work with you to promote flexible working as a means of removing the barriers that people with caring responsibilities face in the workplace.

Proposed motion

This Council notes:

- 📌 Polling from Working Families that found 8 in 10 UK parents (82%) would be likely to apply for a job that lists flexible working options, while only 3 in 10 parents (31%) would be likely to apply for a job that does not list flexible working options.
- 📌 Many top UK employers agree that offering flexibility at the point of recruitment is essential.
- 📌 Flexible working is no longer just a 'nice-to-have'. It's good for people and good for business—boosting productivity, employee engagement, and staff retention.
- 📌 Councils play a leading role in showcasing positive employment practice through their own actions.
- 📌 Flexible Working has received cross party support with the Employment Relations (Flexible Working) Bill being supported by both the Government and opposition parties.
- 📌 The Civil Service is a proud adopter of Working Families' 'Happy to Talk Flexible Working' logo.

This Council resolves to:

- 📌 Work with local employers to promote the benefits of flexible working arrangements for employers and employees.
- 📌 Encourage all local employers to create more flexible working opportunities by advertising all jobs as flexible, unless there are solid business reasons not to.
- 📌 Advertise all council jobs as flexible, unless there are solid business reasons not to, listing the ways in which jobs can be done on a flexible basis in the advert.
- 📌 Use the ['Happy to Talk Flexible Working'](#) logo and strapline on all relevant job adverts

About Working Families

Working Families is the UK's national charity for working parents and carers. Our mission is to remove the barriers that people with caring responsibilities face in the workplace.

We provide free legal advice to parents and carers on their rights at work. We give employers the tools they need to support their people while creating a flexible, high-performing workforce. And we advocate on behalf of the UK's 17.5 million working parents and carers, influencing policy through campaigns informed by ground-breaking research.

Our recent policy work has included working with MPs from across the political spectrum, especially supporting both the Government and Yasmin Qureshi MP with the Employment Relations (Flexible Working) Bill which has received cross party support from across the political spectrum and we have previously worked with a range of local councils and councillors to help them work with us to signpost their residents towards our Legal Advice Service.

Contacts

To discuss the proposed motion, opportunities to collaborate with Working Families to remove the barriers that people with caring responsibilities face in the workplace, or the work

of our award-winning Legal Advice Service, please contact our Parliamentary and Stakeholder Engagement Manager Kyle Green at kyle.green@workingfamilies.org.uk

To discuss joining other councils as one of our employer members, please contact our Employer Services team: employers@workingfamilies.org.uk

As the UK's national charity for working parents and carers, Working Families supports all types of organisations to create flexible, high-performing family friendly working environments, regardless of size, maturity, and working dynamic.

Our members have access to a wealth of helpful information and regular discussion events, with an annual, in-depth benchmarking process, designed to help employers assess how family friendly they are being. They can utilise our many toolkits and case-studies, which help them create a new culture and provisions that are fit for purpose, helping them shift mindsets and behaviours within their organisations.

Each employer member is assigned one of our experienced Relationship Managers, who offer on-going support, such as policy reviews, feedback and best practice guidance. We have many public sector members, such as: Waltham Forest Council, Surrey County Council, Financial Services Compensation Scheme, Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, NELFT NHS Foundation Trust, Network Rail, Royal Air Force, Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities, University of Manchester, to name just a few organisations.

ⁱ [ONS: Economic Inactivity by reason](#) (June 2023)

ⁱⁱ [Timewise: Flexible Jobs Index 2022](#)

ⁱⁱⁱ [Working Families: Business Case for Flexible Working](#)