

Introduction to hiring flexibly: Managers Guide

The purpose of this document is to explain why hiring flexibly can be beneficial to you and how to go about it.

Why flexible working makes business sense

At Hackney, we have had a flexible working policy for some time but it is still largely embraced by parents and other people with caring responsibilities, for whom we accommodate special arrangements. Our belief is that flexible working is beneficial for many other people and we would like to increase the number of roles which offer it. The reasons are:

Flexibility will help us attract and keep the best talent

We know that people are our biggest asset, so we want to find and keep the very best employees we can. And all the evidence suggests that flexibility is a key way to attract and retain great people:

- In a recent Timewise survey, 87% of people said they already had access to flexible working or wanted it.¹
- Reasons varied from reduced commuting time, to increased health and wellbeing, childcare, or managing a long term health condition or disability.
- In a UK-based CIPD study, **75% of employers said that flexible working has a positive effect on retention, and 73% felt it improves staff motivation².**

Flexibility will make our workforce more diverse

As a local authority, it is important to us that our workforce represents our local community. This can help ensure that the decisions and judgments we are making as an organisation are made by a diverse and representative team. In addition diverse teams have been shown to improve innovation and creativity.

Flexibility will maximise our efficiency and productivity

It's no surprise that introducing flexible working can reduce spend on estates and office space; it can also improve productivity:

- Allowing our employees to work remotely or part time would usually result in less people being in our buildings at once.

¹ Timewise 2017: The Talent Imperative

² CIPD 2012: "Flexible Working Provision and Uptake"

- This could lead to a reduction in both our office space and our carbon footprint, and cut our business overheads significantly.
- Global communications company BT estimates that **having around 70,000 flexible workers saves them around £700 million a year on property**, as well as **reducing absenteeism by 60%**³.
- Many part time and job share workers report that their set-up allows them to bring higher levels of enthusiasm, energy and commitment to their role.

Hiring flexible candidates

Whilst there is a high demand for flexible roles, and many benefits in offering it, still less than 1 in 10 quality vacancies in London offer the option of flexible working ⁴. We want to encourage managers in Hackney to offer roles flexibly when you can.

- **Identify the flexibility you can offer**

Our guide to designing flexible jobs should help you work out which roles can offer which type of flexibility. For example, you might indicate a role could be done part time or could offer occasional home working.

- **Mention the flexibility you can offer in the job advert**

The important step is to mention this flexibility in the job advert. This will attract more candidates to the role, and potentially a more diverse pool. The more explicit you are about the types of flexibility you can offer, the less chance a candidate will ask about something which won't work. You can also mention in interviews that Hackney is a flexible working council, as a positive part of working at Hackney.

- **Wait until offer stage to discuss the details of their ask**

The best time to explore what they're looking for is at the job offer stage when you can negotiate openly having established already they are a good fit for the role requirements. This prevents any concerns that their request for a particular working pattern influenced your decision over appointing them or not.

Be prepared to negotiate if needs to be find something which will work for both sides. A trial period can be a good way forward if you're not sure whether an arrangement will work. And build in regular informal reviews of how it is going.

³ <https://www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/centers/cwf/individuals/pdf/benefitsCEOFlex.pdf>

⁴ Timewise flexible jobs index 2017

Case Study: Hiring Flexibly

The candidate story:

"I joined Camden in October 2015 as a financial advisor in the team supporting the Council's Community Investment Programme – a flagship regeneration and infrastructure project.

I work 18 hours a week, split over three days. There are three of us doing the same role – one working full-time and two working part-time. We support individual projects but work as one team and it works really well.

After having my daughter, I returned to my job at a large private organisation four days a week. Although the role was interesting, I wanted to spend more time with my daughter, and reduce my commute.

I was job hunting for six months in total – and my role at Camden was one of only two suitable jobs I saw advertised on a flexible basis during that time.

For me, that's a huge issue. I have a strong background and solid experience. It simply shouldn't be the case that I only find two jobs to apply for in six months. I'm sure there are countless women and men like me who are in a similar predicament. Being open-minded to flexible working and what it can offer – both for the business and the employee – really does get the best results. I know so many talented people who just aren't getting the opportunity to put their skills to use.

Having the role advertised on a flexible basis made the world of difference throughout the application process. I felt so relaxed discussing the potential options and never felt uncomfortable asking questions. Everyone has been so open-minded to different working arrangements, it's embedded in the culture of the Council – and that has a really positive impact on your day-to-day life.

Now I'm at home two days a week with my daughter and work shorter days – so I get to pick her up from nursery. We can do things like ballet classes and swimming classes, and I'm getting to see more of her development. She's so much happier – and so am I.

For me, having the right work-life balance means I come to work motivated and able to think more clearly. I don't have to worry about home while I'm here. My friends say I'm really lucky, and I am."

The Manager's story

"I never find it easy to fill vacancies in my team, with many people choosing to do the role for a couple of years to get the experience and then move on. When I spoke to the recruitment team, they asked if I would be happy to advertise the role as open to flexibility. I wasn't sure about it at first, but was persuaded to try it and see what quality candidates came through.

I was impressed that we received more applications than the last time we recruited. I was encouraged by the recruitment team to purely judge the candidates on their merit and not ask at interview too much about their need for flexibility. Emma was the stand out candidate and when I rang her to offer her the post, I then mentioned that the role had been open to flexibility and she should let me know if she was interested in this. Emma responded that she had done her previous role on a 4 day a week basis but would like to see if 3 days was possible. We discussed how this could work in my team. I already had a couple of part time people already in similar roles so I could see the potential to share the work across the team. We had two other people who don't work Fridays so we agreed she would work this day. And we agreed to set a work pattern initially and to review after 3 months.

As we kept in touch during her initial few weeks, I checked in how the work pattern was going. Emma explained she was happy to switch her days occasionally to cover key meetings, which really helps us. Overall I'm very happy with the arrangement – we've benefitted from an engaged and experienced person who gets her work done to a high standard.'