

Enhancing Family-Friendly and Flexible Working Policies in UK Corporate Landscape

Key Findings:

- 73% of the firms analysed do have published information regarding their offering of parental leave. However, only 18% had a separate FFP available to view.
 - 63% of the firms analysed mention hybrid/flexible working on their employer or career site. However, only 21% had a published flexible working policy to reinforce this benefit.
 - The most popular format of publicised policies was PDF files. However, there is a lack of formalised policies available to view for candidates that reinforce these practices.
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Executive Overview:

This whitepaper presents an analysis of family-friendly and flexible working policies among UK companies. By focusing on those recognised as the best places to work in 2023, identified by FTSE100 and Times100 lists, we can understand the current landscape of family-friendly benefits and flexible working arrangements, identify gaps, and propose potential areas for improvement.

Introduction:

The pandemic shook the 'normal' structures of working environments, forcing people to home working. This has now introduced individuals to the possibilities to choose their working location and dynamics. This has meant the wants and needs of many candidates and employees have changed following the acknowledgement of hybrid working. This has led to a clear spotlight on family-friendly policies and flexible working arrangements. Many employers recognise that a positive workplace culture is centred around the wellbeing of its employees. Moreover, embracing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives has become increasingly pivotal in this landscape. The focus on hybrid working provides an opportune moment for companies to align their policies with DEI principles. By ensuring that family-friendly and flexible working initiatives are inclusive and equitable, organisations not only address the diverse needs of their workforce but also contribute to fostering a more inclusive workplace culture.

Companies have adapted to more flexible structures, accommodating the diverse needs of their workforce. Family-friendly policies, which may include parental leave, flexible scheduling, and support mechanisms for personal and family commitments, have become pivotal in shaping this culture. Additionally, flexible working arrangements have also gained prominence. This recognition stems from an understanding that employees' lives extend beyond office walls and is reflected in the introduction of the Employment Rights Bill in Spring 2024. The bill will allow the following changes:

- The number of times employees can make a flexible working request every 12 months will increase from one to two.
- Currently, employers must respond within three months to any flexible working request, this will be reduced to two months.
- Employers will be required to consult with the employee before rejecting a flexible working request.
- The requirement on the employee to explain in the request what effect, if any, the flexible working request would have on the organisation and how it could be dealt with will be removed.

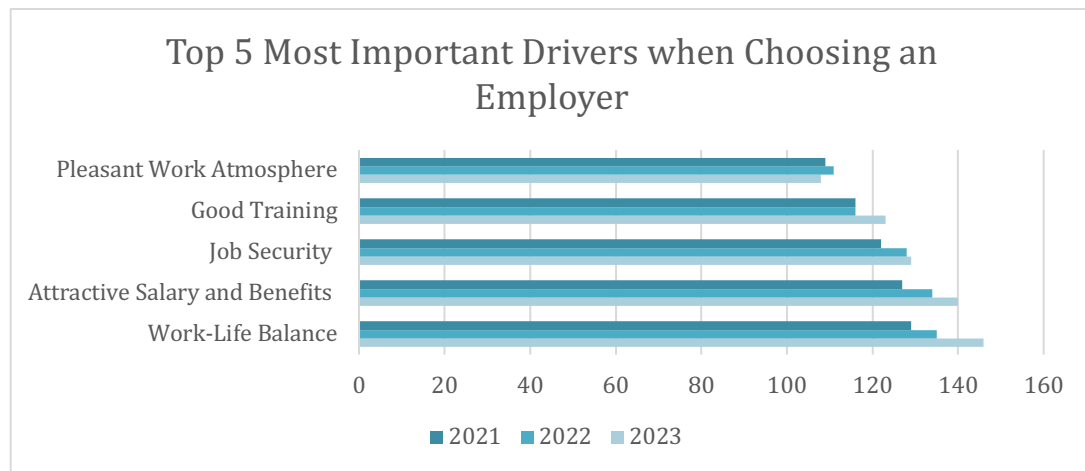
SOURCE: [Trades Union Congress](#)

This whitepaper endeavours to assess the accessibility of information for candidates regarding family-friendly and flexible working policies offered by leading UK companies in the

FTSE100 and Times100. Through an analysis of whether these companies openly present their policies and details about their benefits, we aim to reveal the available opportunities for candidates and highlight where employers can offer more transparency. The rationale behind this exploration is anchored in the recognition of the potential ambiguity surrounding these aspects for candidates. By identifying these disparities, we uncover not just gaps but opportunities for organisations to redefine their strategies and offerings.

Work-Life Balance, Bridging the Gap Between Employee Expectations and Employer Offerings

Research from Randstad in their 2023 global report has deduced that having a work-life balance is rapidly growing as the most important driver of for candidates in the job market.



SOURCE: [Randstad Employer Brand Research 2023](#)

In 2023 work-life balance appears as the top driver for choosing an employer indicating their desire for a more flexible and accommodating work environment.

Evaluation of Current employer	
1	is conveniently located
2	long-term job security
3	financially healthy
4	good reputation
5	good work-life balance
6	pleasant work atmosphere
7	interesting job content
8	career progression
9	attractive salary and benefits
10	gives back to society

Profile of Ideal Employer	
1	good work-life balance
2	attractive salary and benefits
3	long-term job security
4	good training
5	pleasant work atmosphere
6	career progression
7	is conveniently located
8	strong management
9	very good reputation
10	financially healthy

This research also revealed there is a clear gap between the evaluation of their employer's offering and their ideal employer profile.

SOURCE: [Randstad Employer Brand Research 2023](#)

The fact that work-life balance and salary & benefits, two of the top drivers for choosing an employer, are rated lower for their current employer indicates a gap in meeting employees' expectations. The discrepancy highlights employers could benefit from re-evaluating and adjusting their policies, programs, and culture to better meet the needs and expectations of their workforce.

Research has also shown that flexible workers have a higher level of job satisfaction and commitment. In their [Health and Wellbeing at Work report](#), the CIPD has found that flexible working can also reduce absence rates and allow employees to better manage their long-term health conditions and mental health. Embracing flexible working arrangements is not only beneficial for employees but also advantageous for employers in terms of employee satisfaction, commitment, productivity, and overall organisational success.

Clarity Matters: The Significance of Defined Policies and Information

The introduction of hybrid working has produced a degree of ambiguity regarding what exactly constitutes a flexible work arrangement. It encompasses remote and in-office work, but the specifics can vary widely among organisations.

The [CIPD](#) has developed a [factsheet](#) to outline the different types of flexible working arrangements an employer offers to diminish confusion. They describe flexible working as a:

'a type of working arrangement which gives a degree of flexibility on how long, where, when and at what times employees work.'

And include definitions for several arrangements :

- ***Flexitime:*** Employees can choose their work hours within specified limits.
- ***Regular Remote Work:*** Employees work away from the office, often from home.
- ***Hybrid Working:*** A mix of remote and on-site work.
- ***Term-Time Working:*** Employees remain on permanent contracts but take leave during school holidays.
- ***Compressed Hours:*** Workweeks or fortnights with longer shifts.
- ***Part-Time Work:*** Employees work less than full-time hours.

SOURCE: [CIPD](#)

This list isn't exhaustive but it provides several examples of what companies may offer.

Furthermore, flexible working policies further facilitate this balance by clarifying how they can use their autonomy to manage their work in a way that suits their individual and family needs. The importance of accessible information and formalised policies becomes evident in navigating the ambiguity surrounding hybrid working arrangements. Clear and readily available information helps employees and organisations establish a shared understanding of what constitutes a flexible work arrangement and the benefits that are a part of it.

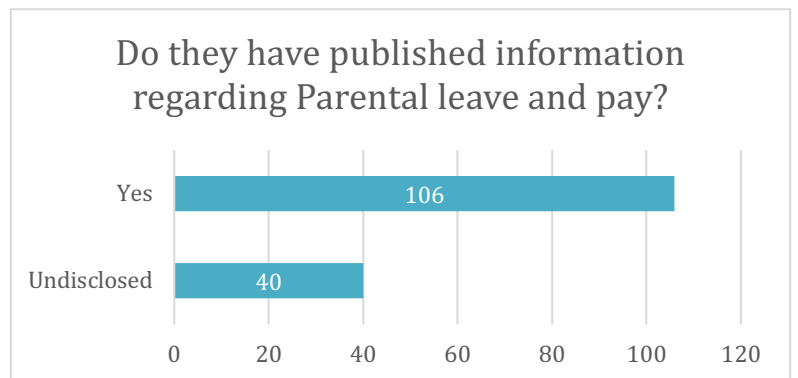
Scoping Study: How do employers perform?

In this section, we delve into the results of our scoping study beginning with family-friendly policies followed by flexible working policies, before offering our key insights and recommendations. By analysing both FTSE100 and Times100 companies, we've uncovered valuable insights into the provision of formal documentation regarding flexible working and family-friendly policies as well as what benefits may be included for prospective employees to understand if the job is right for them.

Family-Friendly Offering:

Main Objectives:

- Do these firms have a published Family-Friendly policy?^{1*}
- Is there accessible information available regarding these benefits:
 - Parental leave and pay.
 - Secondary carers leave and pay.
 - Adoption leave.
 - Flexible Schedules / hybrid working.
 - Return to work policy.
 - Any stipulations or eligibility?



We noted where this information is found, to see if it is easily accessible to candidates. This included whether this information was published by the firms themselves or by external third parties such as Glassdoor.*

*Glassdoor was included as a source only if the 'benefit' was 'employer verified' on their Glassdoor page.

73% of the firms analysed do have published information regarding their offering of parental leave. Out of the 106 firms that do:

- 42% of information is self-reported.
- 56% found on an external website.

However, only 18% had a separate FFP available to view. These policies were often available to download as PDF files or uploaded to a policies page on their careers website.

Secondary Carers Leave and Pay:

68% do have published information regarding their offering regarding secondary carer leave. Out of the 99 firms that do:

- 43% of information is self-reported.
- 56% of information is found on an external website.

Adoption Leave and Pay:

38% do have published information regarding their offering regarding adoption leave. Out of the 56 firms that do:

- 80% of information is self-reported.
- 20% of information is found on an external website.

Flexible/hybrid working (mentioned alongside FFP):

41% do have published information regarding their offering regarding flexible working for family responsibilities and FFP. Out of the 60 firms that do:

- 68% of information is self-reported.
- 32% of information is found on an external website.

Return to Work:

16% do have published information regarding their return to work procedure. Out of the 24 firms that do:

- 100% of information is self-reported.
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Channels where information can be found:

The most common external and internal sources to gather these insights include:

Sources where information is self-hosted:
Employer's careers site
Company reporting
Company Corporate-governance pages
Company DEI site
Company Media & News site
People/HR site
Sustainability site

Sources where information is externally published:
Company Glassdoor
3 rd party website*

Main findings:

The analysis of categories reveals diverse practices in the disclosure of family-related benefits. While 73% of companies provide information on parental leave, a comparatively low percentage (18%) of firms have a separate family-friendly policy available for viewing. This may mean candidates do not have access to a comprehensive set of guidelines or resources beyond basic information on parental leave. This could leave employees uncertain about the full range of family-related benefits and support available to them.

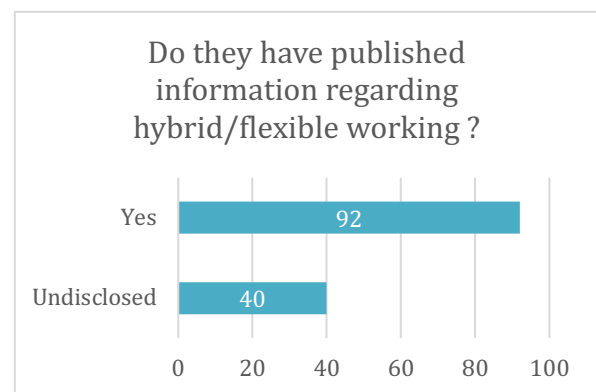
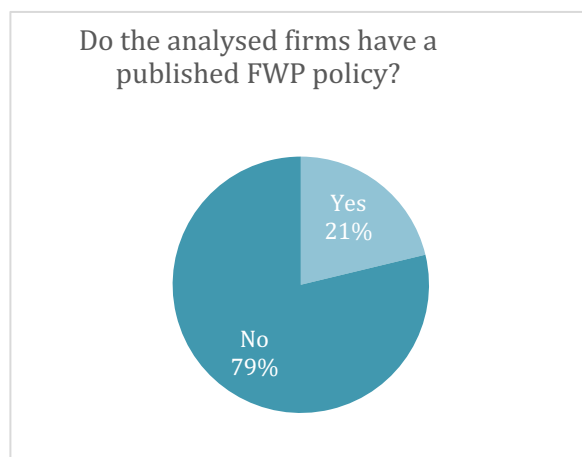
Secondary carer leave details are similarly divided between internal and external sources, whereas adoption leave information is predominantly self-hosted and internally published. Flexible/hybrid working policies for family responsibilities are available in 41% of firms analysed, with a majority publishing this information internally. Return-to-work procedures are less commonly disclosed. Even if information is disclosed therefore the detail isn't always available due to a lack of formal policy.

Flexible Working Policy and Offering:

Main Objectives:

- Do these firms have a published Flexible-Working policy?
 - Is there accessible information available regarding these benefits:
- Hybrid/flexible working
 - Flexitime
 - Remote Work
 - Term-Time Working
 - Compressed Hours
 - Part-Time work

We noted where this information is found, to see if it is easily accessible to candidates.



63% of the firms analysed mention hybrid/flexible working on their employer or career site. However, only 21% had a published flexible working policy to reinforce this benefit. Each was published in PDF form and available to download from their website. Companies with a downloadable policy demonstrate a commitment to transparent communication. This can contribute to building trust with candidates, as they have access to detailed information about the company's approach to flexible working.

When considering the other benefits outlined by the CIPD the firms had information published about:

Flexitime: 18% do have published information regarding flexitime.

Remote Work: 47% have information published regarding remote work.

Term-Time Working: 10% have information published regarding term-time working.

Compressed Hours: 10% have information published regarding compressed hours.

Part-Time work: 21% have information published regarding part-time work.

Where was this information publicised?

- **Internal:** self-reported information.
- **External:** information found on external / 3rd party websites.
- Information was sometimes found in both these sources.
- N/A: did not have any of these categories/benefits published.

Main findings:

There's a significant mention of hybrid/flexible working on employer or career sites (60%), indicating a widespread acknowledgement of the importance of flexibility. However, the formalisation of these policies is considerably lower (21%), suggesting employers may be hesitant or unable to evidence their commitment to formal policies. This potentially indicates a gap between their verbal commitment and the availability of specific details.

Almost half of the firms (47%) have published information regarding remote work, suggesting that it is a widely recognised and formalised aspect of flexible working. This may be influenced by the global shift towards remote work, especially considering developments around the COVID-19 pandemic. However, there is a lower emphasis on benefits such as compressed hours, part-time, and term-time work.

Recommendations and conclusions:

These results highlight the need for more formalised and accessible policies and information. Employers can improve their transparency to their candidates and current employees by:

- Providing a detailed and easily understandable outline of the company's stance and commitments regarding family-friendly and flexible working initiatives.
 - Adopting a standardised approach to information dissemination, preferably through internal communication channels.
 - Broadening the scope of flexible working benefits by placing increased emphasis on benefits such as compressed hours, part-time, and term-time working.
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- Aligning with the company's EDI (Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion) agenda, the enhanced communication of family-friendly and flexible working initiatives can contribute to fostering a more diverse and inclusive workplace. This not only supports attracting a range of employees but also strengthens the company's commitment to EDI principles.

Overall, these findings present an opportunity for companies to enhance the alignment between intention and action, foster transparency, and respond to the evolving dynamics of their workforce. By formalising and communicating policies and benefits effectively, organisations can create a more supportive and flexible work environment that meets the diverse needs of their prospective employees and candidates.

Sources

[Randstad Employer Brand Research 2023](#) – Randstad

[Flexible Working Practices](#) – CIPD

[Health and Wellbeing at Work Report 2023](#) – CIPD

[Employment Right bill \(Flexible working\)](#) – Trades Union Congress
