

B3Living

Flexible Working

We recognised that we had an increasing pool of staff that needed to work flexibly to maintain their employment and support family life. We ensured our benefits package was generous in this area, aimed to be accommodating in managing staff request for flexible working, and have 31 part-time workers out of 169 staff members.

Issue to be resolved

With an increasing number of staff taking maternity leave or with young families, we wanted to enhance our approach on flexible working to ensure gender equality in being able to maintain employment whilst managing increased commitments at home. Without a set approach or policy, women with families may be discouraged from returning or remaining at work and would not have equal access to employment at B3Living. We also wanted to retain valued staff members.

Action taken

In addition to offering enhanced maternity leave and pay, flexitime, career breaks, carers leave and childcare vouchers, we implemented a 'duvet day' policy, perfect for taking the day off at short notice after an unsettled night with the children! We ensured that we had open discussions with the employees returning from maternity leave or with family requirements to make sure we could set up an arrangement they felt comfortable with and to help them balance their work and family lives.

Despite an increase in part-time workers, they still have access to all of the benefits, although some of them need to be on a pro rata basis, for example annual leave. Wherever possible we maintain full access to the benefits, for example full medical insurance and free access to a gym.

We also take care to stagger key meetings so that everyone has a chance to attend, regardless of their working patterns, such as our annual planning workshops. Where there is a key event on a fixed date, such as the Staff Conference, we give plenty of notice to allow for childcare arrangements and offer staff the choice of being paid or taking the time back another day.

The culture of the organisation is also very important. We welcome the children of our staff into the organisation, and have events they can attend, including a children's Christmas party, and our staff summer BBQ where we lay on things especially for children including bouncy castle and games. This helps other staff to understand their colleagues' other commitments outside the workplace and also creates a family atmosphere. We are very flexible when staff need to bring their children to work with them. The values and approach of the Executive Team and our Chief Executive play a key part in this.

This flexible approach has also be especially helpful in ensuring women do not lose their seniority when they go on maternity leave. By being flexible we have been able to ensure that women who want to progress in their careers are able to do so; this is important to us as an organisation as we wish to retain talent within B3Living.

Result

Of 169 staff members, 31 now work part-time hours to suit their needs. Here are some examples:

"I returned to work on compressed hours, working full-time hours in 4 days. This reduces my childcare costs, allows me to earn a full-time wage, but more importantly allows me to spend a whole day with my daughter each week. They have been brilliant in accommodating me. I can also do some work from home during the school holidays." Jenny Cornwell, Income Services Manager.

"I work 2 days every week, and couldn't have come back on full time hours after maternity leave as I have limited childcare options. The company have been really accommodating and it has made the difference in me being able to work, at a level that I want to." Helen Bundy, HR Manager.

"I work 34 hours a week, most of this during 4 days of the week, with a couple of hours made up from home. This gives me every Monday with my daughter. Had I been asked to return full time I would have done, but with childcare costs as they are I wouldn't have had much left of my income." Deborah Fenton, Head of Support and Re-housing.

Next Steps

A flexible working policy is currently being agreed to formalise our approach and publicise it to all staff. We recognise that others may wish to work flexibly for other reasons. We are also looking at piloting an 'annual hours' contract for a member of staff that will allow them to take school holidays off.

Any other information

We were delighted to be top ten in the 2012 Sunday Times top 100 companies list in the not-for-profit sector and strive to improve on this success.

Contact

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