

The following checklist is offered as guidance to help you as an employer to consider whether your recruitment documents are attracting Returners (parents and carers) to the workforce.

When collating the toolkit, we asked Returners whether they would be interested in working for an employer on the basis of their website, a job advert and a specific Job Description and Person Specification (JDPS). We found that interest in an employer diminished when the information provided became specific to the role. Returners reported they would 'definitely' want to work for an employer when presented with generic information on their website (as this often referred to flexible working and a supportive working culture), yet this interest reduced to 'possibly' to 'no interest' in working for them when presented with a more detailed job advert and specific JDPS. The suggestion of flexible working and the appearance of being family or carer-friendly reduced as the information became more specific to the role and this meant Returners felt disengaged from the employer.

What is key in attracting Returners to an organisation is being clear about what the organisation can offer, as well as what the job will entail.

What is Breaking Down Barriers?

GMCVO, Stockport Homes Group, People First Housing Association and BAM Construct UK all participated in Breaking Down Barriers workshops during the duration of the Caring, Working, Living project.

During the sessions, Returners reviewed employers' recruitment information including their website, job adverts and a Job Description and Person Specification (JDPS) for specific roles.

14 Returners took part in these sessions which provided feedback for employers and helped shape this checklist.

Your website

Your careers pages are key to engaging Returners with your organisation and you need to be specific about how the organisation will support them.



Be clear...

- About the types of flexible working on offer. Returners don't want to make applications and get to the interview stage before finding out about flexible working opportunities. For more information on flexible working, see Part One of the toolkit.
- About the benefits of working for the organisation e.g. if you list an Employee Assistance Programme as a benefit then include an explanatory sentence. Don't list a pension as an employee benefit, as all employers offer this: it is the contribution that is important.
- About the types of training offered. Returners look for evidence of training and support and whether you offer accredited training or qualifications. If you do, list a selection of available courses and if there are any qualifying factors e.g. whether an employee has to be in post for a set duration before being eligible.
- About whether your organisation has qualified for any accreditations that demonstrate a commitment to flexible working or showcase you as a supportive and inclusive employer, such as Disability Confident or Carer Confident.

Gold standard



A number of organisations involved in Caring, Working, Living have included information about carer-friendly policies and flexible working on their websites including: Deloitte, Lloyds Banking Group and URBED.

Your job advert

Now is your chance to show how the role is suitable for Returners and importantly, how it supports a positive work-life balance.



Be clear...

- About what types of flexible working can be offered for the specific role. See our [Flexible Working Visual](#) for more information.
- About whether roles are full-time, part-time or can be worked flexibly. Unless specified, Returners will assume the role is full-time and are less likely to apply if they have existing caring responsibilities.
- About the type of training offered specific to the role e.g. is it delivered over a continuous number of days which could make it difficult to complete for a non-full-time employee; is it spread out over a longer period, or delivered online?
- About annual leave and sick pay: Returners are looking for a fair employer that is transparent about terms and conditions.

Job boards

It is important that employers think about where jobs are advertised and which job boards offer the best options for flexible working.

With the exception of Indeed and LinkedIn (which was used by the minority of Returners) it appears that Returners and employers are using different job boards and recruitment tools.

Returners looking for flexible and term-time only working patterns are more likely to use public sector websites, such as Greater Jobs. We also found that employers are using social media to advertise roles, such as LinkedIn, more than Returners are.

For more information on job boards, download our report, ['Flexible working – the role of job boards in better promoting flexible work'](#).

Your Job Description and Person Specification (JDPS)

The key to converting interest in a job advert and website into an application, is to ensure the JDPS does not create more questions than it answers.



Be clear...

- About the logistics: about the geographic area the role covers so Returners are clear about the amount of travel involved; whether travel expenses are reimbursed; why a driving license is necessary and whether DBS checks are reimbursed (where applicable).
- About shift patterns (where applicable) e.g. how often do they change; whether it is possible to establish a consistent shift pattern to enable planning for school pick up/drop off or other planned care. If a statement about the need to work outside core hours is included, be clear about the frequency with which this is required.
- If evening and weekend work is actually a rarity, then don't make it appear a requirement as Returners may be put off from applying if it conflicts with childcare or other care needs.
- About what flexible working options are available, not just what is required from the employee. Also be clear about when flexibility can be offered i.e. as soon as a contract is offered; or after 26 weeks of employment when employees have a legal right to request flexible working.
- About whether experience is essential or desirable. Don't rate sector based experience as essential unless it really is: you could lose a potential applicant at the first point of the JDPS.
- About the level of IT skills required, as well as what training is on offer, including access to qualifications.
- About the workload. Specifying the need to manage conflicting demands and/or prioritising time can be off-putting: it can make it seem like the workload is unfair or unrealistic for one person. This might particularly be the case for part-time roles.

Get in touch

Contact Rebecca Harris to find out more about this service and other support that Caring, Working, Living can offer.

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