



# Flexible working for all?

The impact of the right to request regulations in Scotland

## Recommendations for employers

In 2010, the UK Government extended the right to request flexible working regulations to all employees. Close the Gap's new research, *Flexible Working for All?*, looks at the availability and uptake of flexible working in Scotland between 2010 and 2015 to identify whether this regulatory change has resulted in increased flexible working across Scotland's labour market.

The research reveals that it has had very little impact on uptake of flexible working, women's access to flexible working specifically, and therefore gender equality at work more broadly. The findings demonstrate that there are still barriers to flexible working in Scotland's workplaces.

There is clear and mounting global evidence that flexible working is good for your bottom line. Employers that want to enjoy the business benefits flexible working can bring should consider the following actions:

1. Gather gender-disaggregated data on flexible working uptake, including requests, refusals and reasons for refusals, by department or team, where possible, and analyse this information to identify gendered patterns to flexible working across the organisation.
2. Map the distribution of workers who work part-time and/or flexibly across the organisation to identify whether a lack of flexibility and quality part-time work is preventing women from progressing, or from doing stereotypically male jobs.

3. Deliver training to all line managers with responsibility for decision-making on flexible working, including implementing the policy, managing flexible working requests and the business case for flexible working.
4. Build capacity in line managers to generate creative solutions to operational barriers to flexible working, and enable them to challenge the status quo in their teams.
5. Advertise all jobs as being considered for part-time and/or flexible working, unless there is a strong business case not to.
6. Consider using the Family Friendly Working Scotland strapline “Happy to talk flexible working” when advertising jobs.
7. Gauge current awareness and perceptions of the organisation’s flexible working practice. This may be done through staff engagement mechanisms such as a staff survey, focus groups or through trade union engagement.
8. Where awareness is low, share profiles of employees on different working patterns at different levels, for example senior employees who work part-time and employees in lower grades who do homeworking or work flexi-time.
9. SME employers should use Close the Gap’s Think Business, Think Equality online self-assessment tool to see how their flexible working practice measures up, and obtain a tailored action plan. It’s available at [www.thinkbusinessthinkequality.org.uk](http://www.thinkbusinessthinkequality.org.uk).
10. Large employers should use Close the Gap’s Close Your Pay Gap online tool to identify how changes to their flexible working practice can reduce their gender pay gap. It’s available at [www.closeyourpaygap.org.uk](http://www.closeyourpaygap.org.uk).

The *Flexible Working for All?* research report is available at:

[www.closesthegap.org.uk](http://www.closesthegap.org.uk)

Close the Gap works in Scotland on women’s labour market participation. We work with policymakers, employers and unions to influence and enable action that will address the causes of women’s inequality at work.

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