

Government says in the interest of employers and employees to make offer of flexible working standard

- Liz Truss calls for flexible working to be normalised – giving employees the option to things like part-time/flexi time, working from home and job shares.
- New research from the UK Government and jobs website Indeed reveals offering flexible working arrangements increases job applications by 30%
- A national shift to flexible working would boost productivity and particularly help women and those outside major cities

Ahead of International Women's Day, Minister for Women & Equalities, Liz Truss, has called for employers to make flexible working a standard option for employees, to help level-up the UK, boost opportunities for women and reduce geographic inequality as we recover from COVID-19.

New research – published today by the Government-backed Behavioural Insights Team (BIT) and jobs website Indeed – shows offering flexible working explicitly in job ads would increase applications by up to 30%.

The research, which analysed nearly 20 million applications and is the largest of its kind ever conducted in the UK, shows greater transparency in job adverts would create at least 174,000 flexible jobs to the UK economy per year.

With more people working flexibly due to Covid, Truss argues now is the time to normalise it across the country. She believes the move will boost employment in areas away from major cities and help turbocharge opportunities for women – who are twice as likely as men to work flexibly.

Flexible working is shown to increase the productivity and morale of workers, and Truss says making it an option will help address the UK's longstanding productivity gap and help level-up the country.

Minister for Women & Equalities, Liz Truss, said:

“Our commitment to flexible working is based on our desire to open up employment opportunities to people regardless of their sex or location. The shift for many people to work from home during the pandemic has changed mindsets and now is a chance to seize the opportunity of making flexible working the norm, rather than something employees have to specially request.

“The fact is that for many jobs there are invisible restrictions that hold

people back – like the need to live in high-cost accommodation close to the centre of cities or maintain working arrangements that are very hard to combine with family or other responsibilities.

“We now have the chance to break down these barriers and boost opportunities for everyone.”

David Halpern, CEO of BIT said:

“This is an amazing trial, and a great credit to our partners in the Equality Hub and Indeed, the global jobsite. It’s a huge result in several ways. We think it may be the BIGGEST experimental social policy trial ever published – certainly in Britain, and perhaps in the world.

“It also had big effects. It boosted the number of jobs advertised as flexible by around 17%, and in turn boosted the number of applicants by at least 20%. It’s also a particularly important result in the context of Covid, and a changed world of work.”

Deepa Somasundari, senior director of strategic projects at the global job site Indeed, said:

“We constantly test our products and use those learnings to build a more equitable system for those looking for work and in doing so make the hiring process fairer. Our work with the Behavioural Insights Team led us to make changes in the UK and internationally that help fulfil our mission of helping all people get jobs.

“We know people value flexible work opportunities and as a result of the pandemic, there is increasing expectation that jobs are designed with this in mind. For employers, this means reconsidering the notion that flexible work is a benefit and instead acknowledging it as a better way of working that could positively impact the lives of women and therefore society as a whole.”

The research from BIT & Indeed builds on another government backed report that was published in December. Insurance company Zurich worked with the BIT to advertise all roles as flexible as part of a trial with BIT, this led to a 20% jump in the number of women applying for senior roles within the company and double the number of total applications.

Almost 40% of employees worked from home in 2020, and the appetite for flexibility hit new heights during the COVID-19 pandemic. Research has shown that 9 out of 10 jobseekers want increased flexibility, be it remote working (60%), flexitime (54%) or reduced hours (26%).

Minister for Women, Baroness Berridge, said:

“We continue to see the benefits of flexible working, now more than ever. These findings add to existing evidence showing how both men and women stand to benefit from working from home and returners programmes.

“Our work with Indeed has proven how much benefit there is for employers in advertising flexible roles and how doing so will help to normalise flexible

working. Everyone can benefit from flexible working, but the research shows that for women it can be especially important. Flexible working can be a vital tool at the disposal of employers, helping to achieve workplace equality.”

Paweł Adrjan, head of EMEA research at the global job site Indeed, said:

“Covid-19 turned the labour market upside down and today job vacancies are -37% below their pre-pandemic trend. While no sector has been immune to the virus some have fared worse than others with job postings drying up much faster and deeper in customer-facing occupations that typically attract more women than men.

“Interest in flexible work was growing before Covid-19 before accelerating over the past year and now that the vaccine program offers hope of a jobs recovery it remains to be seen how employers respond to these changes and address widening inequalities.”

Further information

About the test

In 2017, the Government Equalities Office (GEO) commissioned BIT to deliver a three year programme of work – the Gender and Behavioural Insights (GABI) programme. The programme includes the running of trials to design and test interventions to improve gender equality in the UK.

As part of this programme, BIT partnered with job site Indeed and Harvard Business School, to test a behaviourally-informed intervention to encourage employers to advertise more jobs with flexible working options.

The aim of the trials was to test the impact of introducing a prompt in the job listing template which gave employers the option to advertise jobs with a choice of flexible working options, compared to business-as-usual with no such prompt.

They were presented with nine different options ranging from flexitime to job sharing. Selected options would then add an additional list of flexible working arrangements to their job posting thus offering a more prominent way to identify flexible options.

Round one

The first randomised controlled trial involved over 200,000 job postings and over five million job applications on Indeed.co.uk to assess the impact on a) the % of job postings mentioning flexibility options and b) the number of job applications flexible roles received.

Analysis throughout 2020 found that by implementing a prompt to employers to consider whether jobs could be offered flexibly led to 20% more jobs being advertised with flexible working options. And, when job adverts offered flexible working, the study showed that they attracted up to 30% more applicants.

Round two

The second round of testing looked at the impact of additional prompts and was performed on a sample size of almost 500,000 job ads, involving over 14 million job applications.

Additional prompts viewed by employers highlighted that flexibility is a legal right in the UK, and that flexibility is gender inclusive, given both men and women desire it.

The main results were replicated to a similar degree on flexible job postings: 20% flex adoption (Round 1) vs 16.5% flex adoption (Round 2). When it came to applications, the main result was a little weaker and started from a higher baseline: 30% increase in applications (Test 1) vs 19% (Test 2). The main conclusion we can take from Round 2 is that the results from Round 1 replicate and can be trusted.

[Delivering sustainable and resilient urban economic development through UK-Durban \(eThekweni\) Partnership](#)

This year the UK's Global Future Cities Programme celebrates its one-year anniversary. Through its work the programme has promoted sustainable and inclusive economic growth with transformative projects in three municipalities, City of Cape Town, eThekweni Municipality (Durban), and City of Johannesburg, on transportation and mobility, urban planning, resilience and data innovation in South Africa.

In April 2020 the Programme expanded and adapted in response to the COVID-19 crisis in cities. Through this bolstered support, eThekweni Municipality was able to manage the shocks induced by COVID-19 on economy and informal settlements with assistance focused on ensuring effective delivery of basic services in informal settlements and policy development for sustainable economic recovery.

This year is an important year for climate change and the High Commission is proud to celebrate its partnership with the eThekweni Municipality and its innovative approach to greener urban regeneration, resilience and economic development. Our collaboration with eThekweni Municipality focuses on sustainable transport and urban planning (Transit-Oriented Development) and effective management and support for informal settlements. This is expected to result in access to safe, affordable and quality transport for nearly 85% of Durban's residents, increasing access to opportunities and improving lives and livelihoods. With further targeted support aimed at improving the lives of the city's nearly 290,000 households within informal settlements.

As a coastal city, Durban's increasing vulnerability to the impacts of climate change amplifies the urgency and gravity of such macro-scale projects. It also means that our partnership with eThekweni Municipality is driven by inclusion and empowerment of vulnerable communities while building broader resilience in the city's environmental, social and economic fabric.

As the host of COP26 in Glasgow this year, the UK is committed to working with South Africa and join forces with civil society, companies and peoples on the frontline of tackling climate change to inspire action together for our planet. The Global Future Cities Programme through its cutting-edge work in cities such as Durban has proven instrumental in actualising greater ambition on climate change and sustainable economic growth. The UK values its partnership with eThekweni Municipality and looks forward to continued cooperation for greener, resilient and inclusive development.

1. This technical support is delivered in partnership with PwC-led Consortium Future Cities South Africa (FCSA) and Strategic Advisor UN-Habitat.
2. Durban hosted COP17 in 2011, the first UN climate change conference in Africa and delivered successful outcomes of the negotiations.
3. eThekweni Municipality has positioned itself as a climate leader, evidenced when Mayor Mxolisi Kaunda was named C40 Vice-Chair of Africa. He remains a key contributor to the Africa's just urban transition in the face of climate emergency.
4. The City has developed policy initiatives such as Durban Resilience Strategy and Durban Climate Action Plan, demonstrating its long-standing commitment to sustainable and equitable development.
5. Link to key documents: [Durban Resilience Strategy](#); [Durban Climate Action Plan](#)

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[Space launch from British soil one step closer](#)

- government on course to legislate for UK spaceflight by the end of this year
- first-ever launch into space from British soil could have lift-off in the early 2020s
- UK spaceflight plans would create high-skilled jobs in an industry worth

£14.8 billion, as we build back better from the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic

A giant leap in British spaceflight history is being made today (5 March 2021) as the government publishes its [commercial spaceflight consultation response](#), paving the way for space launches from UK soil.

Over the past few months, the government has been inviting industry, stakeholders and the public to have their say on the rules that will govern our spaceflight programme – and the consultation has captured the imagination of people across the UK, including schoolchildren.

The resulting legislation will help to propel the development of commercial spaceflight technologies, from traditional rockets launched vertically into space to high-altitude balloons and spaceplanes, with launches potentially taking place within the next few years.

[Video about the future of UK spaceflight](#)

Spaceports could also be built in south-west England, Scotland and Wales, inspiring and exciting a new generation of scientists and engineers, creating high-skilled jobs and cementing the government's aim for the UK to be the location of the first launches of this type in Europe.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

The sky is no longer the limit when it comes to the UK's ambitions in this sector, and today we're making a giant leap for growth and prosperity for the whole of Great Britain.

I'm committed to growing the UK's space industry and, with the most modern piece of space legislation in the world, we are cementing our leading role in this sector, unlocking a new era in commercial spaceflight for all 4 corners of our nation.

The regulations to implement the [Space Industry Act 2018](#) will drive research and innovation, feeding into our emerging [national space strategy](#) as we level up the UK and promote growth in this thriving sector.

They strike a balance between creating the conditions that will allow the space sector to flourish in the UK while ensuring that it's also safe.

Science Minister Amanda Solloway said:

The UK's space sector is thriving, and we have bold ambitions to be the first country in Europe to launch small satellites while building space capabilities in every corner of the UK.

Working with our space industry, regulators and across government, we will develop a modern, safe and flexible regulatory framework

that will support a new era of sustainable commercial spaceflight across the UK.

Already a global leader in commercial small satellite research and development, government and industry have set a target to grow the UK's share of the global space market to 10% by 2030.

The government has already awarded grants totalling nearly £40 million to establish commercial vertical and horizontal small satellite launches from UK spaceports.

Last month, the Department for Transport also published [guidance on the environmental objectives around spaceflight](#). Access to space and the use of space-based tech will bring many benefits to the environment, allowing us to observe weather patterns, monitor climate change and harmful activities such as illegal deforestation, and manage natural resources.

£79 million to boost mental health support for children and young people

- Nearly 3 million children in England to be supported by mental health support teams in schools
- Around 22,500 more children and young people to access community mental health services
- 2,000 more children and young people to access eating disorder services

Young people have been uniquely impacted by the pandemic and lockdown, with NHS research suggesting 1 in 6 may now have a mental health problem, up from 1 in 9 in 2017.

The number of mental health support teams in schools and colleges will grow from 59 to 400 by April 2023, supporting nearly 3 million children. Mental health support teams work in a variety of ways, including enabling children to text their local mental health support team, with a health professional responding within an hour during the school day offering them advice, or providing families with tips on how to spot that the children and young people are struggling with their mental health.

The teams also help staff within schools and colleges to provide a 'whole school approach' to mental health and wellbeing through training sessions for parents or workshops for teachers.

Throughout the pandemic, these teams have continued to work virtually, providing vital support for young people during lockdown. Schools have hailed their success in supporting both students and staff. In Kent, teams have

provided 20-minute telephone counselling sessions for parents struggling with the competing demands of life under lockdown, alongside virtual drop-in sessions for school staff on how to support children with their mental health.

Access to community mental health services will also be expanded, giving 22,500 more children and young people access to help and support by 2021 to 2022 – including talking therapies and cognitive behavioural therapy.

This accelerates the commitment to expand services as part of the [NHS Long Term Plan](#), which will see an additional 345,000 more children and young people access mental health services by 2024.

As we near step one of the [roadmap](#), with schools returning from Monday, the government has expanded the support available to children and young people who may be suffering from poor mental health as a result of, or exacerbated by, the pandemic.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

Over the last year great focus has rightly been placed on our physical health, but I am incredibly conscious of the impact the pandemic has had on people's mental health and wellbeing.

Children and young people have been particularly impacted by disruption to their routine, education and social lives and I am committed to doing all I can to ensure mental health support is there for those who need it.

Our response to this global pandemic will not only treat the public health threat of coronavirus but ensure our clinicians have the resources to respond to the long-term impact on people's mental health, to provide support to everyone in their hour of need.

Children and young people facing a mental health crisis will continue to get support through 24/7 crisis lines and will benefit from additional funding to support follow-up crisis treatment at home where necessary.

Eating disorder services for conditions like anorexia and bulimia will also be accessible to an additional 2,000 children and young people in the community. This follows NHS England's plans to expand rapid access to specialist NHS treatment for young people with eating disorders across England, aiming to contact patients within 48 hours and beginning treatment as soon as 2 weeks later.

Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Nadine Dorries said:

This has been an exceptionally difficult year, especially for our children and young people, and we know it is having a real impact on mental health.

This additional funding will mean children who need to can access services in the community, as well as providing early intervention in schools.

I am committed to supporting everyone's mental health and wellbeing, and doing everything we can to ensure young people who need help, get help.

Children and young people's mental health services have remained open throughout the pandemic, adapting to deliver services remotely where appropriate.

NHS Mental Health Director Claire Murdoch said:

The pandemic has turned our lives upside down and hit children and young people particularly hard.

NHS mental health services have worked around the clock, proactively reaching out to and caring for children and young people despite challenging circumstances – and we stand steadfast in our commitment to continue to improve mental health care for each and every one of them.

This funding announced as part of the Spending Review last November will now support NHS England's work to increase the number of mental health support teams in schools and colleges to 400 by 2023, and growing community services to treat more children and young people than ever before.

Paul Farmer, Chief Executive of Mind said:

It's positive that the UK government have confirmed that £79 million of the previously announced £500 million investment in mental health has been allocated to support children and young people's mental health. With schools re-opening in England next week, the commitment to having better mental health support for pupils cannot come soon enough.

We know that high levels of poor mental health and problems accessing mental health services were a problem for many children and young people even before the pandemic, and that coronavirus has disproportionately affected younger people. Over the past year, our young people have faced a whole load of additional challenges, including school closures, loneliness and isolation, and the knock-on effect of the recession causing problems for families such as debt, unemployment, housing and access to benefits.

There is still lots more work to be done to ensure that every young person gets the support they need for their mental health. But this

is a positive step forward in cementing mental health at the heart of recovery from the pandemic and beyond.

Children's Minister Vicky Ford said:

For many young people this pandemic has amplified the feeling of lack of control, which can have such a huge impact on their mental health and wellbeing.

This additional funding will be absolutely vital and the new mental health support teams will enable even more children and young people to get the support they need quickly. It builds on the expert training programme we've introduced for school and college staff and our Mental Health in Education Action Group to address the mental health issues young people are experiencing and improving the help available.

This challenging time may be turbulent, but our commitment to improve mental health support remains firm and we are prioritising this as more pupils and students return to face-to-face education next week.

To help children and young people, their parents and carers manage their mental wellbeing, deal with stress and tackle issues like anxiety and uncertainty, Public Health England has a series of dedicated resources on the [Every Mind Matters website](#).

This includes tips on self care and dealing with change.

Dr Alex George, government's Youth Mental Health Ambassador, said:

This funding will make a huge difference to young people's lives, and I am so pleased to see this level of commitment from the government and the Prime Minister.

The mental health support teams in schools, together with the child and adolescent mental health services are vital sources of support, and I will continue to work with the government on supporting the wellbeing of children and young people.

Education staff will be supported to respond to the emotional and mental health pressures some children and young people may be feeling as a result of COVID-19 as they return to school by the Wellbeing for Education Return programme backed by £8 million, and free online psychological training modules on how to provide practical and emotional support to children and young people affected by emergencies or crisis situations.

This funding forms part of the £500 million for mental health announced at

the 2021 to 2022 spending review.

[£3 million pilot to reduce reoffending by young adults](#)

- Specialist support for 18-25 year olds under probation supervision
- First hub to be based in Newham, London
- Range of specialist services, including drug and mental health support, will be based under one roof

The hub, the first of its kind, will be based at Newham Probation Office and has been developed by the Ministry of Justice and the Mayor for London's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC).

Young adults have a particularly high risk of reoffending and are more likely to carry out drug, robbery and possession of weapons offences, and be caught up in gang crime.

Mental health and substance misuse experts will work alongside National Probation Service staff, as part of an innovative new approach ensuring vulnerable young adults, many of whom had troubled upbringings and poor education, receive the enhanced support they need to avoid a life of crime.

Offenders released without a home or a job are significantly more likely to reoffend, so accommodation, training and employment services will also operate from the hub to help cut crime.

This support is already available but bringing this range of services under one roof and tackling these complex issues together at an early stage can prevent thousands of people becoming victims each year and save some of the £18 billion annual cost of repeat crimes.

Lord Chancellor and Justice Secretary, Robert Buckland, MP, said:

This ground-breaking new model will help offenders get their lives back on the straight-and-narrow before it's too late and they become career criminals.

It will mean less reoffending and fewer people becoming victims of crime while also giving these young adults all the tools they need to make the most of their lives.

London's Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime, Sophie Linden, said:

It's vital we do everything we can to prevent reoffending and give young people who have been through the criminal justice system the support they need to turn their lives around.

We know the pandemic has meant fewer jobs and opportunities for our young people and that is why this new hub in Newham is so important. It will give us the platform to make vital interventions and deliver specialist support to vulnerable young people, helping them turn away from crime and rebuild their lives through access to housing, education and job opportunities.

The pilot will launch in July and run until March 2023 for 18-25 year olds who are assessed as having low levels of maturity and 17 year olds transitioning from the Youth Offending Service to adult probation. It will then be externally evaluated and, if a success at reducing reoffending and improving outcomes for this cohort, rolled out across the country.

All staff will receive specific training in the brain development of young people. Young adults have distinct needs, which are different to both older adults and children and treating them as a specific group will ensure the root causes of their offending are spotted and addressed earlier on in their development.

This £3 million of Government funding follows a £148 million investment to protect people from the scourge of illegal drugs and a £70 million package to support offenders into temporary accommodation upon release.

Taken together, this £220 million of funding highlights the Government's commitment to tackling crime.