

Case study: West Midlands Police

Flexible working

West Midlands Police introduced a range of creative flexible working options to address issues that affect their ability to **attract and retain key skills**:

- Working for a police force often requires unsocial hours and long shifts and it can be hard to balance these demands with family and caring responsibilities.
- The workforce is ageing and staff can now work beyond age 65 but many older workers prefer flexible working patterns.

Forms of flexible working introduced

- Those not employed on a shift system can work flexible hours. This allows them to work any hours comprising a wide time band as long as they work the compulsory core hours. Staff can accrue up to 10 hours leave a month, which can be taken as flexi-days.
- Compressed hours working the equivalent of 5 days in just 4, enabling 1 day off a week.
- Annualised hours, working a given number of hours each year rather than each week, specifically to retain the input of highly experienced older workers.
- Term time working, using paid and unpaid leave over school holidays.
- Part-time working, takes many forms and can vary with individual circumstances and operational requirements.
- Job-share partners, treated as part-time employment contracts.
- Flexible workplaces, by providing employees and officers with laptops so they can work from home or any other location.

Perceived barriers overcome by West Midlands Police

- The 24/7 nature of police business.
- The demands of the job doesn't allow clocking in and out.
- Officers can't just walk out of major incidents.

Impact on the organisation

- Reduced absenteeism, higher productivity and greater workforce flexibility.
- Attracting and retaining female workers – over 30% of officers are female, the second highest proportion of female officers in the country.

Lessons learned

- In retrospect, West Midlands Police say it should have provided more awareness training for staff and managers on flexible working, to counter initial confusion on the options and the belief that they were just for parents of young children.