

UK employers must gear up for the potential of a compressed four-day week

12 months ago



The education minister, Jacqui Smith, recently suggested that professionals could be given the right to request 'compressed hours' in a four-day week – as part of the Government's wider drive to improve employment rights and get more people into work.

Whilst Smith has denied that this would effectively 'force' employers into giving all employees a compressed four-day week, a new poll from talent solutions expert [Robert Walters](#) has found that 55% of professionals, if given the option would definitely request it. A further third would seriously consider it – leaving only 12% opting to stick to the current five days.

Longer hours not a problem?

The compressed four-day week could see professionals working up to 10 hours a day.

According to the poll, 47% of professionals felt confident that an 2 additional hours added onto their current working day would have minimal impact on their overall productivity.

Daniel Harris, Director of Robert Walters London & South East comments: "Whilst many professionals seem confident that this would not impact their overall productivity, this would definitely be something employers would have to monitor closely to ensure they aren't dropping off in those final hours of the workday."

Another move towards better work-life balance

76% of professionals stated that the most important benefit they'd get from working compressed hours would be a better work-life balance.

Not only that, but further Robert Walters research shows that when considering a new role, 65% of UK professionals stated that the work-life balance it offers plays a major part in their decision to accept or reject it.

Daniel Harris, Director of Robert Walters London & South East comments: "Whether it was due to fallout from the pandemic or Gen-Z's entrance into the market solidifying work-life balance as a crucial value for professionals, it is no doubt here to stay. Employers actively offering true flexible working will have a significant competitive edge."

Outdated working models

58% of UK employers stated they'd run into issues when trying to accommodate employee requests for a compressed four-day week – with 20% stating it would cause disruptions and 18% saying it categorically wouldn't suit their working model.

However – 67% of professionals think that having the option to compress their workweek could improve their concentration and motivation at work.

Daniel comments: "Employers can't afford to be inflexible when it comes to creating the best working environment for their employees. Doing so, risks productivity and overall employee job satisfaction which can in turn, damage overall output and company results."

Widening talent pools

The UK's rate of economic inactivity for people aged 16-64 currently sits at 22.2%, up from 21.9% in February – which was already above estimates from a year ago.

The compressed four-day week could go some way in reducing this by encouraging more professionals back to work, especially those with care responsibilities.

Daniel adds: "One less day of work per week means for many working parents, one less day they have to afford childcare for. This can mean a big difference at the end of each month, especially with living costs still high and pressuring many professionals."

Daniel concludes: "With continuing economic instability, tight hiring budgets and skills gaps widening – employers must be doing everything they can to ensure they are attracting and retaining the right people, this means seizing any opportunity to bring more diverse talent into the market."