

# Flexible working policy

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# Flexible Working Policy

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## 1. ABOUT THIS POLICY

**1.1** This policy aims to encourage employees to consider flexible working arrangements. We recognise that a better work-life balance can improve employee motivation, performance and productivity, and reduce stress. Therefore, we want to support our employees achieve a better balance between work and their other priorities, such as caring responsibilities, leisure activities, further learning and other interests.

**1.2** This flexible working policy gives eligible employees an opportunity to request a change to their working pattern.

**1.3** We are committed to agreeing any flexible working arrangements, provided that the needs and objectives of both the organisation and the employee can be met.

**1.4** It is our policy to encourage open discussion with employees. An employee that thinks they may benefit from flexible working is encouraged to contact their line manager to arrange an informal discussion to talk about the options.

**1.5** We will deal with flexible working requests in a reasonable manner and within a reasonable time. In any event the time between making a request and notifying you of a final decision (including the outcome of any appeal) will be less than three months unless we have agreed a longer period with you.

**1.6** This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and we may amend it at any time.

## 2. ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible to make a flexible working request, you must:

- (a)** be an employee;
- (b)** have worked for us continuously for at least 26 weeks at the date your request is made; and
- (c)** not have made a flexible working request during the last 12 months (even if you withdrew that request).

## 3. WHAT IS A FLEXIBLE WORKING REQUEST?

**3.1** Flexible working is any type of working arrangement that gives some degree of flexibility on how long, where and when an employee works.

**3.2** The following flexible working options are considered to be the typical arrangements that employees will request but we recognise that there may be alternatives or a combination of options which are suitable to both the organisation and the employee:

- Annualised hours
- Compressed hours
- Flexitime
- Home-working
- Job-sharing
- Overtime
- Part-time working
- Term-time working

## 4. TYPES OF FLEXIBLE WORKING

**4.1** **Annualised hours** where an employee's contractual working hours are calculated as the total

number of hours to be worked over the year, allowing flexible working patterns to be worked throughout the year.

Usually the hours will be divided into rostered hours, which are set, and unallocated hours, when an employee can be called into work as demand dictates (and to cover unplanned work and employee absence). Payment will be in 12 equal instalments (although arrangements may be permitted where the pay for the work actually done is in the period to which the payment relates)

**4.2 Compressed hours** are where an employee works their usual full time hours in fewer days by working longer blocks meaning that there is no reduction in their pay. For example, a five-day week is compressed into four days, or a 10-day fortnight into nine days

**4.3 Adjusted hours** allows an employee to change their start and finish times and they must work an agreed number of hours during a week.

**4.4 Home-working** is when an employee regularly carries out all, or part of, their duties from home rather than the employer's premises. We can consider home-working being an occasional agreed day or a mix of home and office based work each week.

**4.5 Job-sharing** is an arrangement where a full-time post is divided into two part-time roles. The two job holders then share the overall duties and responsibilities. Their skills and the hours each employee wishes to work must be compatible, and meet the needs of the organisation. Pay and benefits are shared in proportion to the hours each works. Job sharing can be considered where the creation of a single part-time post is difficult, or where two individuals wish to work part-time. The suitability of posts for job-sharing will be stated in any internal or external advertisements

**4.6 Part-time working** covers any arrangement where an employee is contracted to work anything less than typical full time hours for the type of work in question. For example, an employee who only works Monday to Wednesday. The suitability of posts for part-time working will be stated in any internal or external advertisements

**4.7 Term-time working** is where an employee reduces their hours or takes time off during any school holidays. Any weeks above their annual leave entitlement will be unpaid. Salary will be paid in 12 equal monthly instalments

## **5. THE NEEDS OF THE ORGANISATION**

**5.1** We are committed to providing a range of appropriate working patterns. However, employees and management need to be realistic and to recognise that not all flexible working options will be appropriate for all roles.

**5.2** Where a flexible working arrangement is proposed the organisation will need to take into account a number of criteria including (but not limited to) the following:

- a) the costs associated with the proposed arrangement
- b) the effect of the proposed arrangement on other staff
- c) the need for, and effect on, supervision
- d) the existing structure of the department
- e) the availability of staff resources
- f) details of the tasks specific to the role
- g) the workload of the role
- h) whether it is a request for a reasonable adjustment related to a disability
- i) health and safety issues

## **6. MAKING A FLEXIBLE WORKING REQUEST**

**6.1** An eligible employee is entitled to submit [one] flexible working request in a twelve-month period (an employee is entitled to additional requests if they relate to a statutory entitlement e.g. the Equality Act 2010 right to request reasonable adjustments).

**6.2** All requests must be made in writing by email or letter

**6.3** Any request made must include:

- a) the date of the application
- b) the changes that the employee is seeking to their terms and conditions
- c) the date from when the employee would like the proposed change to come into effect

- d) what effect the employee thinks the requested change would have on the organisation
- e) how, in their view, any such effect could be dealt with
- f) whether this is a statutory or non-statutory request
- g) whether a previous application for flexible working has been made
- h) the dates of any previous applications
- i) If the employee is making the request in relation to the Equality Act, e.g. as a reasonable adjustment relating to a disability, this should be made clear in the application.

**6.4** If an application does not contain all of the required information the line manager will explain to the employee what additional or amended information they need to provide and ask the employee to resubmit the request.

## **7. MEETING**

**7.1** Upon receiving a written request for flexible working your line manager will usually seek to arrange a meeting with the employee to:

- a) discuss the request
- b) find out more about the proposed working arrangements
- c) how it could be of benefit to both the employee and organisation

**7.2** If a meeting is arranged, it will be held within [28 days] of the organisation receiving the request. This time limit may be extended with the agreement of both the employee and HR department.

**7.3** The employee will be given advance notice of the time, date and place of the meeting. If the initial date is problematic, then one further date will be proposed. If a face to face meeting is difficult to arrange then, if agreed by the employee and HR department the meeting may be held over the telephone.

**7.4** At the meeting the employee may, if they wish, be accompanied by a workplace colleague or a trade union representative.

**7.5** If the employee fails to attend a meeting and then fails to attend a rearranged meeting without good reason, their application will be deemed to have been withdrawn.

**7.6** Where a request can, without further discussion, be approved as stated in the employee's written application a meeting to discuss the request may not be necessary. The employee will be informed of the agreement to the request by a confirmation letter as outlined in the section 'Responding to a flexible working request' within 28 days of the organisation receiving the request. This time limit may be extended with the agreement of both the employee and HR department.

## **8. RESPONDING TO A FLEXIBLE WORKING REQUEST**

**8.1** The line manager will consider the proposed flexible working arrangements, looking at the potential benefits, and adverse effects, to the employee and to the organisation in implementing the proposed changes.

**8.2** Each request will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Agreeing to one request will not set a precedent or create the right for another employee to be granted a similar change to their working pattern.

**8.3** The employee will be informed in writing of the decision as soon as is reasonably practicable, but no later than 14 days after the meeting.

**8.4** The request may be granted in full, in part or refused. We may propose a modified version of the request, the request may be granted on a temporary basis, or the employee may be asked to try the flexible working arrangement for a trial period.

**8.5** If the request is agreed, then the employee will be sent a confirmation letter which will include details of the new arrangements. The employee should contact HR within 14 days if they wish to discuss the new arrangements further, or have any concerns.

**8.6** We may reject your request for one or more of the following business reasons:

- a) the burden of additional costs;
- b) detrimental effect on ability to meet customer demand;
- c) inability to reorganise work among existing staff;
- d) inability to recruit additional staff;

- e) detrimental impact on quality;
- f) detrimental impact on performance;
- g) insufficiency of work during the periods that you propose to work; or
- h) planned changes.

**8.7** If we are unable to agree to your request, we will write to tell you which of those reasons applies in your case. We will also set out the appeal procedure.

## **9. RIGHT TO APPEAL DECISION**

**9.1** The employee has the right to appeal the decision if their request is refused or is only agreed in part.

**9.2** The employee may lodge an appeal within 14 days of being notified of a decision on their application. This should be done in writing and clearly state the grounds on which they are appealing. The appeal will be heard within 14 days. The employee will then be informed of the outcome to their appeal within 14 days of the appeal meeting. These time limits may be extended with the agreement of both the employee and HR.

## **10. TRIALLING NEW WORKING ARRANGEMENTS**

**10.1** Where there is some uncertainty about whether the flexible working arrangement is practicable for an employee and/or the organisation a trial period may be agreed. If a trial period is arranged, we will allow sufficient time for an employee and their manager to implement and become used to the new working practices before taking any decisions on the viability of a new arrangement.

## **11. VARYING AN EMPLOYEE'S CONTRACT**

**11.1** Where flexible working practices are agreed as a permanent change, a variation will need to be made to the employee's contract of employment. A change of terms and conditions letter or contract of employment will be sent to the employee within 28 days of the change to the employee's working pattern being agreed.

**11.2** If the employee has any questions or concerns about the new contract of employment or change of terms of conditions they should contact HR to discuss the matter further.

**11.3** Where a trial period has been arranged HR will provide the employee with a document that details their new working pattern and makes clear that it is only a temporary variation to the terms of the employee's contract. The employee will be informed in writing of the start and end dates of the trial period (although we may reduce or lengthen the trial period where necessary with the agreement of the employee). We reserve the right, at the end of the agreed trial period, to require the employee to revert to their previous working arrangement.

## **12. COMPLAINTS AND FURTHER INFORMATION**

We are strongly opposed to any form of victimisation of individuals who work, or request to work under flexible working arrangements.

If an employee feels that they have been treated unfairly or are dissatisfied with any stage of the flexible process, they should raise their concerns informally with HR.

If informal discussions do not resolve the matter to an employee's satisfaction, they should raise a grievance under our grievance procedure.