

## 12 Flexible Working

### 1. Overview

- 1.1. We will consider and implement proposed changes to working arrangements that enable an Employee to achieve a suitable work-life balance where it is practical and reasonable to do so.
- 1.2. We recognise the potential benefits of flexible working. These include such things as: a reduction in costs, retention of staff and improved productivity.

### 2. What does 'flexible working' mean?

2.1. 'Flexible Working' can mean one or more of the following:

- 'Job sharing' is when two people or more do one full time equivalent job and split the hours between them
- 'Working from home' may mean working entirely from home or undertaking only some hours or tasks from home
- 'Part time working' is working less than full time hours, by either working fewer days or by reducing the number of hours worked per day
- 'Compressed hours working' is working full time hours but over fewer days
- 'Flexi-time' is where the Employee chooses when to start and end work (usually within agreed limits)
- 'Annualised hours working' is where an Employee works a certain amount of hours over the year but has some flexibility about when the work them
- 'Staggered hours working' is where the Employee has different start, finish and break times from others
- 'Phased retirement' enables older workers to reduce their working hours as they approach their desired retirement date

### 3. Who is eligible to make a statutory request?

3.1. To be eligible to apply to work flexibly you must:

- be an employee (rather than a worker, contractor or agency staff),
- have 26 weeks continuous service, and
- not have made a request for flexible working during the past 12 months.

### 4. How to make a request

- 4.1. To make a request complete the Flexible Working Request Form and send this to your manager.
- 4.2. There is no automatic right to flexible working. We will consider all requests in a reasonable manner, taking into account any impact on the department in which the Employee works, its customers / clients, work colleagues and any other relevant factors.

### 5. What we will consider

- 5.1. When a request is received, we will hold a meeting with you within a reasonable time frame to discuss your request. You may bring a work colleague or trade union representative to this meeting if you wish to do so.
- 5.2. We will consider the request carefully and balance the benefits to you with any detriments to the business.
- 5.3. Factors that are considered may include:
  - whether a similar arrangement already exists and operates successfully
  - employee accountability when jobs are shared
  - your ability to attend events such as training days, courses, and meetings
  - planning, information sharing and other work issues associated with shortened or shared hours
  - consistency of approach where jobs or duties are shared
  - receiving numerous requests - the 'tipping point' (see below)
- 5.4. There may be occasions where we receive more than one request to work flexibly from different Employees. Where this happens, it may not be possible to grant all (or any) of the requests received. Requests will be considered in the order they are received and on their own merits.
- 5.5. In addition to the considerations outlined above, we may decide that it will become difficult or impossible to accommodate a significant number of requests and there is a 'tipping point' at which it is no longer feasible to agree to such requests.
- 5.6. If the detriment to the company is unacceptable in one or more of the following areas a request to work flexibly will be declined:
  - Extra costs that will damage the business
  - Inability to reorganise work amongst existing staff
  - Inability to recruit additional staff
  - Adverse impact on quality and performance
  - Inability to meet customer demand
  - Insufficient work during periods the Employee proposes to work
  - Planned changes to the workforce

## **6. How requests will be responded to**

- 6.1. All requests, including any appeals, will normally be considered and determined within 3 months unless an extension is agreed.
- 6.2. Once a decision has been made, you will be notified of this in writing.
- 6.3. If your request is agreed, we will write to you within 28 days of approving your request with a statement of agreed changes and confirmation of the date when flexible working will begin.
- 6.4. Any change to your terms and conditions will be on a permanent basis and your contractual terms will be varied accordingly. This will either be done in a letter or by issuing you with an amended contract of employment.

- 6.5. A reduction in working hours will carry a commensurate reduction in pay.
- 6.6. If we do not agree the request we will provide an explanation for our decision.
- 6.7. We may offer a compromise that meets or partly meets your request; this will only take effect if you agree to it.
- 6.8. If we are unsure that the arrangements requested are viable we may offer to vary your hours on a temporary, trial basis, in which case this will only take effect if you agree to it.

## **7. How to appeal**

- 7.1. If the request is declined you may appeal within 14 days of being notified of this decision.
- 7.2. You can appeal against a decision if you feel the information relied upon was incorrect or incomplete.
- 7.3. A meeting will be convened to consider the appeal.
- 7.4. You will be advised in writing of the appeal outcome within 14 working days of the appeal meeting unless an extension is agreed.

## **8. How to withdraw a request**

- 8.1. If you wish to withdraw a flexible working request you must do this in writing to your manager or to a Director.
- 8.2. If you miss two or more meetings that have been arranged to discuss your request, without satisfactory excuse, we may treat the request as withdrawn and will notify you of this in writing.

## **9. Equal opportunities considerations**

- 9.1. If you are making a request for a reason that relates to a protected characteristic please indicate this when making your application.
- 9.2. A decision to decline a request for flexible working will be justified by reference to the criteria outlined in this policy, however, additional consideration will be given to the weight of justification if a request relates to a protected characteristic.
- 9.3. If you believe a decision to decline your request is discriminatory please include an explanation of the basis for your belief in any appeal.
- 9.4. Please refer to the Equal Opportunities Policy for details of protected characteristics and other information about discrimination.