

FLEXIBLE WORKING SCHEME

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1 INTRODUCTION

Flexible working is a benefit afforded to Service personnel where their contract allows their working arrangements to be conditioned to the Scheme, this is Support staff aligned to Green Book conditions and Grey Book staff who work day shifts, Monday to Friday in “non-operational” roles. The Scheme allows for staff to be flexible, in line with business needs, in respect of the times they start and finish work and take their lunch break. The Service believes that this benefit can assist with caring responsibilities and allow staff to manage their own work life balance to support their outside commitments.

The Fire and Rescue Service is committed to diversity and equal opportunities and considers that flexible working schemes should be available to all employees where the operational needs of the role allow.

Whilst this document will set out the basic principles of the Scheme, Managers must ensure that the business needs are met and offices, departments and telephones are covered during the normal business hours of 8.30 – 17.00, Monday to Thursday and 8.30 – 16:30 on a Friday. Managers must determine the operational needs of their sections and identify any posts that need to be excluded from the flexible working scheme, or have a modified version applied to them, because of the nature of their duties.

Personnel undertaking a job share arrangement and part-time employees are included in the scheme but their ability to take advantage of greater flexibility in the hours they work may be limited by their pattern of working.

Home working is not covered by this policy as this is not a benefit of the flexible working scheme. Home working is a separate arrangement which an individual may agree with their Line Manager as an exception to their normal working day for unexpected circumstances or a specific reason.

For the purposes of this policy, the following terms and conditions will apply:

Allowable Working Hours: These are the hours between which we consider there to be flexibility within the working day. These are set as between 07:30 – 19:00 hrs. Any work carried out outside of these hours must be authorised by the Line Manager and a comment added on Firewatch to support the time worked.

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Core Hours:	These are the hours that staff should be at work every day. These hours are set as 10:00 – 12:00 and 14:00 – 15:00. Staff should be cognisant of the need to ensure departments are covered from 08:30 – 17:00 hrs and whilst a finish time of 15:00 hrs is acceptable, out of courtesy they should notify their Line Manager of their intention to do so in order that adequate office cover is maintained.
Lunch Break:	Minimum of 30 minutes where the working day is 6 hours or more. This should be taken between 12:00 and 14:00, within the working day, and not as a reduction to the finish time. i.e. you should not work from 10:00 – 15:30 and consider your lunch break to be 15:30 – 16:00 as this is not a “break” from work.
Lieu Time:	<p>Time taken off as a result of time credit accrued due to working hours that are additional to the standard contracted requirement. For full time employees, the contractual requirement is usually 37 hours (42 for Grey Book staff).</p> <p>A maximum of 3 days may be taken off as Lieu in any accounting period.</p> <p>Managers may allow staff to “bank” credit for a special occasion. In this circumstance only, up to the equivalent of 5 days lieu time may be “banked” and carried forward to the following accounting period. This should only be considered in “one off” exceptional circumstances and by prior agreement from the Group Manager or Head of Department.</p> <p>Lieu time should be requested in the same way as annual leave and managers must authorise requests in advance of lieu time being taken. In exceptional circumstances lieu time may be taken at short notice with the appropriate authorisation.</p>
Flexi-Balance:	The amount of accrued hours or deficit at any given point in time.
Standard Day:	This is the weekly contracted hours divided by 5. i.e. $37 / 5 = 7$ hrs 24 mins (8.24 mins for Grey Book staff)
Half Day:	This is half the standard day and is considered to be 3 hrs 42 mins (4 hrs 12 mins for Grey Book staff)
Standard Business Hours:	These are the hours that the business unit should be staffed: 08:30 – 17:00 Monday to Thursday 08:30 – 16:30 Friday

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- Accounting Period:** An accounting period covers an 8 week period and is the timeframe during which hours may be used flexibly. Managers should review the flexi-balance of their staff during the accounting period and ensure that the flexi-balance remains within the conditions of this policy at the end of each accounting period.
- Flexi-Balance Credit/Debit:** Staff may work additional hours in line with business needs which may result in them working more than their contracted weekly hours. These additional hours may be accrued and time off (lieu time) taken at a time agreed between the individual and their manager.
- Similarly where an individual may need to take time off, they may have a flexi-balance deficit.
- A credit and deficit balance should be monitored and reviewed at the end of each accounting period, these must fall within the allowable flexi-balance bands.
- Flexi-Balance Bands:** The maximum credit or debit balance **at the end of the accounting period** that may be carried forward to the next period is:
- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Maximum credit to be carried forward: | 20 hours |
| Maximum debit to be carried forward: | 7.5 hours (8.5 hours for Grey Book staff) |
- Any credit in excess of 20 hours at the end of the accounting period will be removed and the balance reduced to 20 hours. No notice that a balance will be adjusted will be given. Staff and managers are expected to manage the flexible working appropriately.

Firewatch Recording of Hours:

Working Hours -

Firewatch is pre-populated with your contracted hours in a standard working pattern. Staff must amend the standard hours to reflect the hours that are actually worked. This includes amending the start and finish times and inputting a lunch break.

Your start time is the time that you are at your workstation, in your workwear, and ready to start work.

Your finish time is when you finish your work for the day. Staff who work in a dirty environment are permitted 10 minutes at the end of their working day, prior to recording their finish time, for washing and changing. This time should include tidying their work area. Office based staff should also ensure that their work area is clear and they have adhered to the "clear desk" principle.

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Ideally staff should input their working hours on a daily basis but should note that no changes can be made to Firewatch Timesheets by an individual once 7 days has elapsed. Amendments after this time may only be made by the Line Manager, HR or Firewatch team.

Accuracy of time recording is imperative and incorrect recording may be considered to be fraudulent and will be investigated by the Service in line with the Service [Disciplinary Policy and Procedure](#).

Managers should check time recording on Firewatch at least once during each accounting period and ensure that adequate lieu time and annual leave is available before authorising.

Annual Leave

Where annual leave is taken for a full day, the standard, pre-populated hours, should not be altered. The annual leave should be input over the standard hours.

Where a half day is taken, annual leave should be entered for the equivalent of a standard half day i.e. 3 hrs 42 minutes (4.12 mins for Grey Book staff) and the actual working time entered to account for the remainder of the day.

Lieu time

Where lieu time is taken for a full day, the standard, pre-populated hours, should not be altered. The activity for the day should be changed from "Support staff working" to "lieu time".

Where a half or part day is taken as lieu time, the actual working time should be entered and the activity for the remaining hours should be changed from "support staff working" to "lieu time"

Sickness absence

Sickness absence should be entered over the standard working hours for the day of absence.

External Appointments (including medical appointments)

Where possible medical appointments should be booked outside of core time to minimise the disruption to the working day. Where this is not possible, the Line Manager should be informed of the likely period of absence to ensure business continuity within the department/team. Medical appointments should be recorded as follows:

- Any time taken for routine medical appointments (such as doctors and dentist) will be taken as lieu time, irrespective of whether the appointment falls within the core or flexible hours
- For hospital appointments where there is limited or no flexibility to change the appointment and where the appointment falls within core hours, then the core hours may be recorded as authorised absence but any absence outside of the core hours will be treated as lieu time. Evidence of the hospital appointment may be requested to support the authorisation of the absence
- Where the appointment is in relation to a condition which falls within the definition of a disability under the Equality Act then the absence may be recorded as authorised absence
- Where the appointment is for a family member (dependent or partner) with a condition which fall within the definition of a disability under the Equality Act, then the

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core hours will be recorded as authorised absence but any absence outside of these hours will be treated as lieu time

- Where insufficient lieu time is available to cover any medical appointments, then annual leave or unpaid leave may be requested
- Where an individual is absent due to minor day surgery, this should be recorded as sickness absence.

Adverse Weather Conditions

Where staff are unable to attend their normal place of work due to adverse weather conditions, staff should notify their line manager and the following approach should be adopted:

- Make their way to their nearest station if they are able to do so safely
- Work from home if they have the capability and can be productive, liaising with their line manager to notify them and discuss any tasks that are being undertaken
- Request Annual Leave or lieu time. If insufficient lieu time or annual leave is available then unpaid leave may be taken.

“Ad hoc” or “informal” breaks

Break times during the day which involve moving away from the workstation for a period of time must be reasonable. Visiting the canteen or kitchen area to consume refreshments should be deducted from the working time.

Ad hoc breaks can be recorded on Firewatch by entering the start and finish times of the working period and then following the same process on return from the break. For example if you started work at 08.30 and had a 15 minute break at 10.30, lunch for 30 minutes at 12.00 and then another break at 14.30 for 15 minutes, your entries would look as follows:

- start time at 08:30
- finish time at 10.30
- start time 10.45
- finish time 12.00
- start time 12.30
- finish time 14:30
- start time 14.45

Further information

If you require any support in completion of Firewatch for any of the activities in respect of timekeeping, please consult the Training Notes on Staffnet. If this does not resolve your query, please contact the Firewatch team.

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