

Flexible Working Hours (Flexi-Scheme) Policy

Employee and Manager Guide

Key Principles

The revised scheme allows for greater flexibility in working practices; however there are some key principles:

- Business needs and service to our customers come first, so the accrual and taking of flexi leave will, at all times, be subject to the needs of the service
- Flexible working must not adversely impact on service delivery
- There must be adequate staff on duty throughout the working day and in particular during the 'normal hours'
- Working additional hours solely to accrue credit is not acceptable. It is only necessary to work long hours if workloads demand and only in agreement with line management.
- Flexible working will be managed. It will need to be agreed in advance between the employee and the manager (where an employee wants to work outside normal business hours, and if there is insufficient or no work to be done at the times the employee wants to work, then they **will not** be able to work at the times they choose)

Manager Responsibilities

Managers are expected to take a practical approach to managing flexible working and to make decisions and judgements based on their particular Service Area, service delivery and customer needs.

Managers should ensure that:

- Sections are adequately staffed during 'normal hours'
- Reasonable working arrangements are in place which allow for the smooth operation of the Sections' activities
- A satisfactory service is available to the public at all times
- Within the framework above, the wishes of individual employees are taken into account wherever possible
- Employees are encouraged to arrange adequate cover amongst themselves, management intervening only if difficulties arise.

Employee Responsibilities

The revised Flexible Working Hours Policy allows for increased flexibility for employees within the framework of ensuring that:

- Business needs are met and
- There is no negative impact on service delivery.

Employees are encouraged to:

- Arrange adequate cover amongst themselves, management intervening only if difficulties arise
- Work with colleagues to ensure that business needs and service to our customers come first
- Understand that the accrual and taking of flexi leave will, at all times, be subject to the needs of the service
- Ensure that flexible working does not adversely impact on service delivery

The Flexi-Scheme will not be appropriate in all service areas and is subject to service delivery needs.

Note

In some services there are examples where flexi leave is being pre booked for the future possibly before it can have been accrued. This suggests that staff may be working long days to accrue extra time for optimising time off, rather than to meet the needs of the service or because work requires/dictates. Flexi accrual is not a mechanism for earning up to 19.5 days additional leave a year especially as the Council has a generous leave entitlement. In most circumstances there shouldn't need to be flexi accrual on a regular basis except where there may be specific urgent work to be completed.

Management will check that hours have been required before approving flexi accrual. Staff should check with their manager before planning extra work/accrual and significant flexi requests. Flexible working needs to be managed effectively.

How the Revised Flexi-Scheme will Work

	New Flexitime Arrangements
The Bandwidth	Will remain 7am - 7pm. Only time worked during the bandwidth will be credited 7am is the earliest time work can commence 7pm is the latest time work can finish.
Lunch / Break	A minimum of 30 minutes should be taken no later than 6 hours from the employee's start time. This also applies to part-time employees who work more than 6 hours per day. Note: According to the Working Time Directive, a worker is entitled to an uninterrupted break of 20 minutes when daily working time is more than six hours. It should be a break in working time and should not be taken either at the start, or at the end, of a working day.
Lunch time	It is no longer a requirement for lunch to be taken between 12 noon and 2pm.
Who can participate in the scheme	The Scheme is voluntary and open to full and part-time employees. Employees have the option to participate in Flexible Working Hours (FWH). If any employee wishes to stop working FWH he/she may do so at the end of an accounting period, subject to Section Head/Supervisor approval. Chief Officers have the discretion to exclude employees from participating in the Scheme, where individual conditions of employment or operational requirements make it impossible for the employee to work flexible hours.
Right of Appeal	Employees who are excluded from the Scheme have a right of appeal through the grievance procedure.
What are 'Normal' Office Hours?	As a minimum these are 0845 - 1730 hours Monday to Thursday 0845 - 1700 hours on Friday. These may be different in your Service Area and you should ensure that you are aware of your own service arrangements.
Part time employees	Part time employees contracted to work less than 37 hours per week or those working unusual hours may be included in the Scheme, but it may be necessary for Section Heads/Supervisors to change the bandwidth times for those employees. Part time employees will have the provisions of the flexible scheme applied on a pro rata basis.
Flexible Hours	These are the times within the bandwidth when an employee may vary his/her starting and finishing times provided the other conditions of the Scheme are satisfied and the needs of the service are catered for. Flexible hours are 7am –7pm. Group Directors may introduce arrangements within the limits detailed above dependent upon the nature and location of the services they provide. You may need to consider the impact that support service assistance/facilities may have on your ability to fully operate the 0700-1900 hours bandwidth in all/parts of your Directorate, and to ensure that the buildings that your staff occupy are accessible to them during the extended bandwidth period where possible. Note: The Introduction of Smarter Working and reducing premises costs should also be considered and many staff will have the ability to work smarter in a variety of locations not just the building that they occupy.

	New Flexitime Arrangements
Standard Time	The number of hours which an employee is contracted to work i.e. full-time 148 hours per 4 weeks, 37 hours per week or 7 hours 24 minutes per day and half a day will be calculated at 3 hours 42 minutes. Pro rata for part time.
Accounting Period	The number of weeks in a flexi-cycle (i.e. 4 weeks) at the end of which, the total hours worked must be calculated to give the debit/credit hours owed. Debit and credit hours accrued must be within the limits specified below
Credit Hours	A maximum of one and a half days (3/10 th of contracted hours) may be taken as flexi-leave in any accounting period. Employees are able to carry over a maximum of one and a half days (3/10 th of contracted hours) credit time into the next accounting period (e.g.11 hours 06 minutes for a full time employee).
Debit Hours	The number of hours worked in the accounting period less than standard time. Up to one day (2/10 th of contracted hours) debit time may be accrued in any accounting period (eg 7 hours 24 minutes for a full time employee) Any excess in debit hours above 7 hours 24 minutes for full time employee or (2/10 th of contracted hours for part time employees) will be substituted for annual leave or deducted from salary after consultation with individual employees.
Flexi-Leave	Can be taken in blocks of not less than half a day. Only one and a half days or equivalent (ie 3 half days) flexi-leave may be taken in any accounting period providing that:- 1. The work of the service does not suffer as a result of the staff absence. (Note: In the event of staff being unable to take accrued flexi-time due to pressure of work/staff shortage etc, management will have the discretion to allow individuals to carry forward more than 11 hours 06 minutes into the next accounting period. This should only be used in very exceptional circumstances and individuals should not be allowed to accrue excessive amounts of flexitime). 2. The absence has been approved by the Section Head/Supervisor. 3. It is not necessary to accrue credit hours before taking flexi-leave.
Time Worked Outside the Bandwidth	Time worked at the workplace outside the bandwidth (ie 0700 to 1900 hours) at the request of management is not strictly part of the Flexi-time Scheme. Time taken off in lieu to compensate for time worked outside the bandwidth will be credited eg an employee who works 4 hours outside the bandwidth will be credited 4 hours at a later time providing prior authorisation has been sought from Section Head/Supervisor. Overtime payments will continue to be made in accordance with the NJC for Local Government Services. Overtime work must be approved in advance by the Section Head/Supervisor.
Credit Adjustment	For the purpose of credit adjustment, time will be credited for absence from work as appropriate under the following circumstances:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Leave • Statutory Holidays • Day Release • Special Leave i.e. blood donors etc • Sickness • Hospital Appointment • Ante-natal Clinic • Optician regarding eye tests for VDU operators • Clinic regarding smear tests • Bereavement Leave

	New Flexitime Arrangements
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lieu Time • Excess Travelling Time
Annual Leave	Time credited for annual leave will be in accordance with contractual hours.
Sickness	<p>Absence because of sickness will be credited in accordance with contractual hours.</p> <p>Where an employee becomes ill part way through the day and goes home he/she will be credited appropriately for the time absent.</p>
Day Release	<p>Absences due to day release will in principle be credited with 3 hours 42 minutes for each half day's absence (7 hours 24 minutes for a whole day release).</p> <p>When day release is taken for part only of a morning or afternoon, then credit allowed for that half day shall be equivalent to the time actually worked or 3 hours 42 minutes whichever is the greater. Employees working different working patterns will need to discuss arrangements with their Manager.</p>
Medical Visits	Absences due to Medical appointments ie dentist, doctor, optician etc excluding hospital visits should have the prior approval of the appropriate Section Head/Supervisor and the time absent from work will be deducted from the daily total.
Hospital Visits	<p>Absence due to hospital visits will be credited as appropriate.</p> <p>Where the hospital visit is for part only of a morning or afternoon then employees will be credited for the hours worked plus the duration of the hospital visit.</p> <p>When the hospital appointment is in the morning employees should whenever possible come into work beforehand. Where this is not practical Section Heads/Supervisors will have the discretion to determine from what time it is reasonable to credit hours. Time will normally be credited from 0845 hours for 37 hour employees.</p> <p>When the hospital visit is in the afternoon and the employee returns to work he/she will be credited for the duration of the hospital visit. If the employee is unable to return to work he/she will be credited in accordance with contractual hours.</p> <p>Section Heads/Supervisors should take into consideration the location of the hospital and the employee's place of work/residence before deciding when to credit hours from.</p>
Excess Travelling Time	Time spent on excess travel during the bandwidth (ie 0700 – 1900 hours) may be claimed as working hours as long as prior authorisation is sought from the Section Head/Supervisor.
Termination of Employment	An employee who is working during a period of notice to terminate his or her employment must erase any debit hours by the end of the employment, otherwise debit hours will be deducted from any outstanding annual leave or salary/wage, after appropriate consultation with the individual.
Recording and Monitoring of Hours Worked	<p>The recording of hours worked will be the responsibility of each employee.</p> <p>Each employee participating in the scheme will be required to maintain an individual record of hours worked. This sheet is completed on a daily basis with:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time In and out • Lunch Break • Any hours credited for Authorised Absence • Any hours debited for Authorised Absence • Lieu Time

	New Flexitime Arrangements
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Daily totals should be calculated and then the sum of the daily figures added to give a weekly total. <p>The employee will need to ensure that they check and verify their flexible working hours recording sheet at the end of each period. The record is retained by the employee and their manager.</p> <p>Electronic access systems and registers may also be used by Services to assist in the monitoring process.</p> <p>Where signing in books or registers are used, each employee will be expected to enter his/her time of arrival and departure in the relevant book.</p> <p>Officers starting or finishing the working day at a location other than the usual signing in/out point should indicate this in the Service register in advance (if known). The actual times of starting and/or finishing should then be added to the Service register alongside this entry as soon as possible.</p>

Useful Documents

A Flexible Working Hours Recording Sheet is attached as Appendix 1. Some Services are currently using Actirecs for time recording and where this is available this should continue to be used. With the introduction of Smarter Working, the intention is that Actirecs will be rolled out across the Organisation. Where Actirecs isn't currently available then the attached Recording Sheet in Appendix 1 should be used. In exceptional circumstances where there are service constraints which mean that electronic time recording systems cannot be used then the model timesheet can be completed manually.

Abuse of the Scheme

Employees who abuse the Scheme can be expected to be withdrawn from the Scheme and will revert to normal fixed working hours. Employees may also be subject to disciplinary action. Employees need to be aware that any falsification of flexi time recorded is a disciplinary offence and will be dealt with accordingly.

What Happens If.....?

There may be a number of situations that arise that raise questions regarding the Scheme and it would be impossible to try and predict every eventuality, some general principles and examples are provided below:

	Situation	Solution
Sickness	I signed in this morning but was forced to leave mid morning through sickness	You should credit yourself for the time you were off sick.
	I have been forced to leave mid afternoon because of sickness.	All the credit you have accrued in the morning will stand, however, similarly to the last solution you will be credited for the time you are off sick in the afternoon.
Working Lunch	I have had a working lunch should I book anything?	You have an obligation under the Flexible Working Hours Scheme to take a minimum lunch break. You must still debit yourself at least ½ hour on your recording sheet.
Part-Time Workers	I work part time, is my bandwidth the same as these specified?	Not necessarily. Your bandwidth hours can be set at the discretion of your Chief Officer ensuring that the service needs are met.
	If I work part time am I still entitled to one and a half days flexi leave per accounting period?	As you work part time your flex leave entitlement will be calculated pro rata to the hours you work eg 3/10 th of contracted hours.

	Situation	Solution
Working away from the Job	The nature of my job means I often have to start and finish work on site, how do I accommodate this in my recording sheet?	Every Flexible Working Hours Scheme is based on mutual trust. In these circumstances you are trusted to indicate an accurate time in your recording sheet at your earliest opportunity.
Smoking	What if I want to take a smoking break?	<p>Please refer to the Council's Smoking Policy for further information. A smoking break should be accounted for in your flexi sheet and in line with the Smoking Policy a minimum of 15 minutes should be recorded.</p> <p>Requests to take a smoking break must always be made to the appropriate manager prior to any break being taken. Any breaks so approved must be recorded by the employee on his/her time/ flexisheet.</p> <p>Whilst staff may smoke during proper non-working time periods (including lunch breaks) away from Council owned premises etc., during such time they must not smoke adjacent to doorways/entrance ways or in any other areas adjacent to Council buildings.</p> <p>Breach of any of the above could result in formal disciplinary proceedings being implemented.</p>
General	I have tried flexi-time but don't like it; can I refer back to normal office hours?	The Flexible Working Hours Scheme is voluntary therefore if at the end of an accounting period you wish to withdraw from the scheme you are quite at liberty to do so. However, once you have withdrawn from the scheme you will not be re-admitted unless you have the consent of your Section Head/ Supervisor.
	I decided initially not to participate on the Flexible Working Hours Scheme. However, having seen the advantages of Flexible Working Hours I would now like to join the scheme, is this possible?	As stated previously, the Flexible Working Hours Scheme is voluntary; therefore if at the end of an accounting period you wish to join the scheme, you may do so providing you have the approval of your Section Head/Supervisor.
	I am unhappy about the way flexi-time is administered in my Section what can I do?	Contact your Head/Supervisor, however, if you do not gain satisfaction your only course of action is to refer to the existing grievance procedure.
	If the Council's core hours are removed, does this mean you can start work later than 10am?	Yes, but as is the current policy, you should seek your manager's approval so that service delivery is not affected. The same applies if you want to leave work early or take a long lunch break during the day.
	Is there still a requirement to have two work sessions during the day?	<p>With regard to whether you are required to have two work sessions in the day, this should be discussed and agreed with your service / area and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business needs and service to our customers come first, so the accrual and taking of flexi leave will, at all times, be subject to the needs of the service

	Situation	Solution
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexible working must not adversely impact on service delivery • There must be adequate staff on duty throughout the working day and in particular during the 'normal'¹ business hours • Working additional hours solely to accrue credit is not acceptable. It is only necessary to work long hours if workloads demand and only in agreement with line management. • Flexible working will be managed. It will need to be agreed in advance between the employee and the manager (where an employee wants to work outside normal business hours, and if there is insufficient or no work to be done at the times the employee wants to work, then they will not be able to work at the times they choose)
	<p>Can I just work my hours all in one session?</p> <p>Is it permissible under the new flexi-time arrangements to finish lunch at 12.30pm and finish work for the day at 7pm?</p>	<p>Under the Flexible Working Hours Scheme Employees should take a break (30 minutes) after working 6 hours continuously.</p> <p>This also applies to part-time employees who work more than 6 hours per day.</p>
	<p>Will the bandwidth remain the same ie from 7am to 7pm?</p>	<p>Yes there are no proposals to change this. There is no proposal to change normal Council opening hours for front line services.</p>
	<p>Is there any constraint on staff regarding how many work sessions they must have in a day? ie people currently generally have two sessions</p>	<p>No there won't be any constraint on the number of sessions going forward, subject to service delivery / customer needs.</p>

Normal Hours - as a minimum 0845 - 1730 hours Monday to Thursday; 0845 - 1700 hours Friday