

Flexible Working Policy & Procedure

The Group believes that flexible working can promote work-life balance and improve employee wellbeing.

Eligibility to apply

All employees who have a minimum of 26 weeks' continuous service have the right to request flexible working and to have their request considered and dealt with in a reasonable manner. Employees can only make one flexible working request in any 12-month period.

Types of requests

- A change to the number of hours that the employee works.
- A request for a change to the pattern of hours worked.
- A request to job share.
- A request regarding a change of location.

Timescales

The law requires that all requests are dealt with within a period of three months from first receipt to notification of the decision on appeal. In order to comply with the three-month deadline, please find recommendations regarding timescales below:

Action	Timescale
The line manager holds a meeting to discuss the request	Within 28 days of receiving the request
Notify employee of decision	Within 17 days of the meeting
Employee lodges an appeal if dissatisfied with the outcome (if applicable)	Employee can appeal within 5 days of notification of decision
Appeal is heard	Appeal takes place within 17 days
Employee is notified of outcome of appeal meeting	Within 17 days of the appeal meeting

These time limits may be extended where both the employee and employer are in agreement. For example, the relevant manager and the employee may agree to extend the time limit to give the employee a trial period on the flexible working arrangements.

Stage 1 – Flexible working application form

All requests must be made in writing either by email or letter by submitting the Flexible Working Application form PERS/134A to the line manager and to a member of the Human Resources team. This form is available under the Human Resources section on Insite.

The flexible working request must include the details below:

Date of the application.
The changes that the employee is seeking to their terms and conditions.
The date on which the employee would like their terms and conditions to come into effect.
What effect the employee thinks the requested change would have on the Company.
How, in the employee's opinion, any such effect might be dealt with.
A statement that this is a statutory request.
Whether or not the employee has made a previous application for flexible working.
If the employee has made a previous request, the date of the application.

If a request is submitted which does not contain all of the above information, the employee will be asked to amend and resubmit the request.

Where the request is being made by a disabled person as part of a request for a reasonable adjustment to their working arrangements, the employee should state this in the written application.

Stage 2 - Meeting to discuss a flexible working request

The line manager will usually arrange a meeting with the employee to deal with the request as soon as possible. Where a request can be approved without further discussion, a meeting will not be necessary.

An employee should be given the right to be accompanied by a work colleague or a trade union representative at any flexible working meeting. The meeting should take place in a meeting room. The aim of the meeting is to find out more about the proposed working arrangements and how they could be of benefit to both the employee and Company.

Stage 3 - Outcome of a flexible working request

After the meeting, the line manager will consider the proposed flexible working arrangements carefully, weighing up the potential benefits to the employee and to the organisation against any adverse impact of implementing the changes. 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. Line managers who receive a request will have regard to the organisation's equal opportunities policy when considering the request.

The employee will be informed in writing of the decision as soon as is reasonably practicable after the meeting. The request may be granted in full or in part: for example, the Company

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. The line manager will give reasons for the rejection of any request. Those reasons must be for one or more prescribed business reasons, which are:

- the burden of additional costs;
- an inability to reorganise work among existing staff;
- an inability to recruit additional staff;
- a detrimental impact on quality;
- a detrimental impact on performance;
- a detrimental effect on ability to meet customer demand;
- insufficient work for the periods the employee proposes to work; and
- a planned structural change to the business.

The line manager must not reject a request for any other reason.

Right to Appeal

The employee is eligible to appeal the decision if the request is not granted. The appeal letter must be received within 5 days of the written decision and submitted in writing to the Human Resources department. The matter will be referred to the next level of management not previously involved in the decision for consideration. An employee should be given the opportunity to be accompanied by a work colleague or a trade union representative at the Appeal meeting. A meeting should be held and a decision must be communicated to the employee.

Flexible working requests that are granted

If the request is granted, the employee and the line manager will discuss how and when the changes will take effect. The manager is required to complete a Change in Terms form PERS/23E and forward this to the HR department. Any changes to terms and conditions will be put in writing and sent to the employee. The employee may be required to sign and return a contract variation within 5 days of receipt.

Problems with a flexible working request

If an employee is dissatisfied or unclear at any stage throughout the process, please contact a member of the HR team.

Failure to attend a meeting

If an employee fails to attend a meeting, including an appeal meeting, and then fails to attend a rearranged meeting without good reason, their application will be deemed to have been withdrawn. The employee will be notified of this decision.

If a manager receives multiple flexible working requests

If a manager receives more than one request to work flexibly from different employees' requests should be considered in the order they are received. Following the outcome of the first request, the business context may have changed and this can be taken into account whilst considering the second request.

Legislation relating to this document

Employment Rights Act 1996

Children and Families Act 2014

Flexible Working Regulations 2014