**Procedure**

We recognise the importance of helping our employees balance their work and home lives by offering flexible working arrangements that enable them to balance their work commitments with other priorities, while balancing this with the needs of our business.

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

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

This policy does not form part of any contract of employment, and we may amend it at any time.

**What is a flexible working request?**

A flexible working request under this policy means a request to do any of the following:

to reduce or vary your working hours;

to reduce or vary the days or times you work; or

to work from a different location (for example, from home).

The possible changes to working arrangements may involve:

* job sharing
* part time working
* annualised hours
* compressed hours
* flexitime
* term time working
* swapping hours
* working from home

Any agreement to a request for flexible working will take effect as a permanent variation to an employee’s terms and conditions, unless it is mutually agreed that this will be a temporary variation.

While an employee has the right to have their request dealt with reasonably, this does not give them the right to a contract variation.

**Making a flexible working request**

The application must:

* be made in writing and state that it is an application for flexible working under the statutory right to make a request;
* state whether a previous application for flexible working has been made under this procedure and, if so, when;
* specify the change applied for and the proposed date for the change to become effective;
* explain the effect the employee thinks the change will have on the business and how that might be dealt with; and
* be signed and dated.

The application must also state whether the variation requested is made in pursuance of a reasonable adjustment under the disability discrimination provisions of the Equality Act 2010.

**Meeting**

A meeting to discuss the request will be arranged between the employee and their line manager. In some cases, we may be able to approve the request without a formal meeting, although it will usually be helpful for the line manager to discuss the employee’s request with them to ensure it is the best solution.

The employee may bring a colleague to the meeting as a companion if they wish. . Where possible, the time and place of the meeting will be convenient to both the line manager and the employee.

**Decision**

Once a decision has been reached, the employee will be informed as soon as possible after the meeting.  You must make a decision within 3 months maximum, however should aim to do this as soon as is reasonably possible.

Where the request is accepted or an alternative to the arrangements requested are proposed, the employee will be given details of the new working arrangements and the date on which they will commence. They will be asked to sign and return a copy of the letter.

If more time is needed to decide, for example, to investigate how the request can be accommodated or to consult several members of staff, this will be discussed with the employee.

An employee may be required to undertake a trial period before a final decision is reached.

There will be circumstances where, due to business and operational requirements, a request cannot be agreed. In these circumstances, the line manager will write to the employee explaining the business reason(s) for turning down the application; and setting out the appeal procedure.

The eight business reasons for which an employee’s request may be rejected are :

* a burden of additional costs;
* a detrimental effect on ability to meet customer demand;
* an inability to re-organise work among existing staff;
* an inability to recruit additional staff;
* a detrimental effect on quality;
* a detrimental effect on performance;
* insufficient levels of work during the periods of proposed work; or
* a planned structural change.

**Appeal**

An employee may appeal in writing within 14 days of receiving the decision. This includes a decision following a trial period. The appeal must be dated and set out the grounds for appeal and sent to a Director.

The Director will hold a meeting with the employee to discuss the appeal. The employee may be accompanied by a colleague of their choice. Where possible, the time and place of the meeting will be convenient to both the Director and the employee.

The employee will be informed of the decision as soon as possible after the appeal meeting. Where the Director upholds the appeal, the employee will be advised of the new working arrangements, details of any trial period, an explanation of changes to the employee’s contract of employment and the date on which they will take effect. They will be asked to sign and return a copy of the letter.

Where the appeal is rejected, the written decision will state the grounds for the decision and explain why those grounds apply. The notice will also state that there is no further right of appeal.

**Withdrawal of an application**

The employee can withdraw their application at any stage before agreement. The employee should write to their line manager stating they wish to withdraw their application.

Where the employee fails to attend a meeting or appeal meeting on more than one occasion or they refuse to provide reasonable information to allow their application to progress without reasonable excuse, the application will be treated as withdrawn. In such circumstances, the employee will receive confirmation that the request has been treated as withdrawn.

**Making an informal request for flexible working**

Employees who are ineligible to make a formal request for flexible working may make an informal request, in writing, to their line manager with information of their proposed pattern of working, the date they propose this to take effect, whether this variation is temporary or permanent, and how any negative effects of the proposed working pattern can be managed.

This request will be considered in line with our operational and staffing needs.

The employee’s line manager will advise the employee what steps will be taken to consider the employee’s request, which may include inviting them to attend a meeting before advising them of the outcome of their request.

**Further Guidance**

**www.acas.org.uk/making-a-flexible-working-request**