

Flexible Working Policy



Contents

- Introduction
- What is flexible working?
- Types of flexible working
- The needs of the organisation
- Eligibility
- Submitting a flexible working request
- Meetings regarding flexible working
- Responding to a flexible working request
- Right to appeal decision
- Trialling of new working arrangements
- Varying an employee's contract
- Complaints and further information

Introduction

This policy aims to explain the process for employees who may want to consider flexible working arrangements. IMS recognises that a better work-life balance can improve employee motivation, performance and productivity, and reduce stress. Therefore IMS wants to support its employees achieve a better balance between work and their other priorities, such as caring responsibilities, further learning and other interests. IMS is committed to agreeing any flexible working arrangements, provided that the needs and objectives of both the business needs and the employee can be met.

It is the organisation's policy to encourage open discussion with employees. An employee that thinks they may benefit from flexible working is encouraged to contact their line manager or the HR department to arrange an informal discussion to talk about the options available.

What is flexible working?

Flexible working is any type of working arrangement that gives some degree of flexibility on how long, where and when an employee works.

The following flexible working options are considered to be the typical arrangements that employees will request but the organisation recognises that there may be alternatives or a combination of options that are suitable to both the organisation and the employee:

- Compressed hours
- Home-working
- Overtime
- Part-time working

Types of flexible working

- **Compressed hours** is where an employee works their usual full time hours in fewer days by working longer blocks meaning that there is no reduction in their pay. For example, a five-day week is compressed into four days, or a 10-day fortnight into nine days
- **Home-working** is when an employee regularly carries out all, or part of, their duties from home rather than the employer's premises. The organisation can consider home-working being an occasional agreed day, a mix of home and office based work each week or a full time arrangement.
- **Overtime** is when hours are worked in addition to the usual full time hours. Overtime can be agreed where the organisation would benefit from an employee working more hours. This is voluntary and an employee can refuse overtime if they wish. Overtime will be paid at one and a half times the basic rate if the (FTE) full time hours for the salaried month is worked.
- **Part-time working** covers any arrangement where an employee is contracted to work anything less than typical full time hours for the type of work in question. For example, an employee who only works Monday to Wednesday. The organisation believes that all posts will be available on a part-time basis, except where a critical examination by line management proves this to be impracticable. The suitability of posts for part-time working will be stated in any internal or external advertisements

The needs of the organisation

The organisation is committed to providing appropriate working patterns. However employees and management need to be realistic and to recognise that not all flexible-working options will be appropriate for all roles.

Where a flexible working arrangement is proposed the organisation will need to take into account a number of criteria including (but not limited to) the following:

- the costs associated with the proposed arrangement
- the effect of the proposed arrangement on other staff
- the need for, and effect on, supervision
- the existing structure of the department
- the availability of staff resources
- details of the tasks specific to the role
- the workload of the role
- whether it is a request for a reasonable adjustment related to a disability
- health and safety issues

Eligibility

Any employee with at least 26 weeks of employment service has a statutory right to request flexible working.

Submitting a flexible working request

An eligible employee is entitled to submit one flexible working request in a twelve-month period (an employee is entitled to additional requests if they relate to a statutory entitlement e.g. the Equality Act 2010 right to request reasonable adjustments).

All requests must be made by email or letter addressed to your line manager or to the HR department. Any request made must include:

- the date of the application
- the changes that the employee is seeking to their terms and conditions
- the date from when the employee would like the proposed change to come into effect
- what effect the employee thinks the requested change would have on the organisation
- how, in their view, any such effect could be dealt with
- whether this is a statutory or non-statutory request
- whether a previous application for flexible working has been made
- the dates of any previous applications

If the employee is making the request in relation to the Equality Act, e.g. as a reasonable adjustment relating to a disability, this should be made clear in the application.

If an application does not contain all of the required information either senior management or your line manager will explain to the employee what additional or amended information they need to provide and ask the employee to resubmit the request.

Meetings regarding a statutory flexible working request

Upon receiving a written request for flexible working the HR department or line manager will usually seek to arrange a meeting with the employee to:

- discuss the request
- find out more about the proposed working arrangements
- how it could be of benefit to both the employee and organisation

If a meeting is arranged it will be held within 28 days of the organisation receiving the request (laid out as required). This time limit may be extended with the agreement of both the employee and management.

The employee will be given advance notice of the time, date and place of the meeting. If the initial date is problematic then one further date will be proposed. If a face to face meeting is difficult to arrange then, if agreed by the employee and management, the meeting may be held over the telephone.

At the meeting the employee may, if they wish, be accompanied by a workplace colleague or a trade union representative.

If the employee fails to attend a meeting and then fails to attend a rearranged meeting without good reason, their application will be deemed to have been withdrawn.

Where a request can, without further discussion, be approved as stated in the employee's written application a meeting to discuss the request may not be necessary. The employee will be informed of the organisation's agreement to the request by a confirmation letter as outlined in the section 'Responding to a flexible working request' within 28 days of the

organisation receiving the request. This time limit may be extended with the agreement of both the employee and management.

Responding to a flexible working request

Senior Management will consider the proposed flexible working arrangements, looking at the potential benefits, and adverse affects, to the employee and to the organisation in implementing the proposed 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.

The employee will be informed in writing of the organisation's decision as soon as is reasonably practicable, but no later than **16 days** after the meeting.

The request may be granted in full, in part or refused. IMS 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. If the request is agreed then the employee will be sent a confirmation letter that will include details of the new arrangements. The employee should contact their line manager or HR department within 14 days if they wish to discuss the new arrangements further, or have any concerns.

Right to appeal decision

The employee has the right to appeal the decision if their request is refused or is only agreed in part.

The employee may lodge an appeal within 14 days of being notified of a decision on their application. This should be done in writing and clearly state the grounds on which they are appealing. The appeal will be heard within 14 days. The employee will then be informed of the outcome to their appeal within 14 days of the appeal meeting. These time limits may be extended with the agreement of both the employee and management.

Trialling new working arrangements

Where there is some uncertainty about whether the flexible working arrangement is practicable for an employee and/or the organisation a trial period may be agreed. If a trial period is arranged the organisation will allow sufficient time for an employee and their manager to implement and become used to the new working practices before taking any decisions on the viability of a new arrangement.

Varying an employee's contract

Where flexible working practices are agreed as a permanent change, a variation will need to be made to the employee's contract of employment. A new contract of employment will be sent to the employee within 35 days of the change to the employee's working pattern being agreed.

If the employee has any questions or concerns about the new contract of employment they should contact their line manager or the HR department to discuss the matter further.

Where a trial period has been arranged the organisation will provide the employee with a document that details their new working pattern and makes clear that it is only a temporary variation to the terms of the employee's contract. The employee will be informed in writing of the start and end dates of the trial period (although the organisation may reduce or lengthen the trial period where necessary with the agreement of the employee). The organisation will reserve the right, at the end of the agreed trial period, to require the employee to revert to their previous working arrangement.

Complaints and further information

IMS is strongly opposed to any form of victimisation of individuals who work, or request to work under flexible working arrangements.

If an employee feels that they have been treated unfairly or are dissatisfied with any stage of the flexible process, they should raise their concerns informally with the HR department or a member of senior management.

If informal discussions do not resolve the matter to an employee's satisfaction, they should raise a grievance under the IMS grievance procedure.

Law relating to this document:

Employment Rights Act 1996
Equality Act 2010
Flexible Working Regulations 2014