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The Right to Request Flexible Working **Scheme**

Guidelines to Managers

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1. **INTRODUCTION**

These guidelines are intended to assist managers in implementing the scheme they should be used in conjunction with the Right to Request Flexible Working Scheme and should not be regarded as an authoritative statement of the law.

Managers should ensure that they have read the Right to Request Flexible Working Scheme and are aware of its contents.

The Rights and Responsibilities of Employers

Employers Rights

- To reject an application when the desired working pattern cannot be accommodated within the needs of the business
- To seek the employee's agreement to extend timescales where it is appropriate
- To consider an application to be withdrawn in certain circumstances

Employers Responsibilities

- To consider requests properly in accordance with the set procedure
- To ensure they adhere to the time limits contained within the procedure
- To provide the employee with appropriate support and information during the course of the application
- To only decline a request where there is a recognised business ground and to explain to the employee in writing why it applies
- To ensure that any variation with the procedure is agreed in advance with the employee and recorded in writing

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Who is eligible under the Scheme?

To make an application under the statutory right the employee will have to meet certain criteria that are set out below:

- Be an employee
- Have worked for the Council continuously for 26 weeks at the date the application is made (agency workers are excluded)
- Not have made another application to work flexibly under the right during the past 12 months

How often can an application be made?

One application a year can be made. Each year runs from the date when the application was made.

What kind of changes can be applied for?

There is scope to apply for a wide variety of different types of working pattern. Eligible employees can request to:

- Change the hours they work
- Change the times when they are required to work; or
- Work from home (whether for all or part of the week)

A request may be as simple as asking to start half an hour later than usual to allow the employee to drop their child off at school. **It is important to recognise that Flexible Working incorporates a wide variety of working practices and that a flexible working arrangement can be any working pattern other than the normal working pattern.**

How long do agreed changes last?

If an application is accepted under the scheme the changes are **permanent** and this should be made clear to the applicant.

What if I am not sure about the impact of changes on the provision of services?

If the officer considering the request is unsure about the impact the granting of the request would have on the service then it is possible to agree a trial period with the employee making the request. **(See 2.8 & 2.9 of the Scheme).**

Can an employee ask for a temporary change?

It may be that an employee will need to make temporary changes to their working pattern because of a particular problem that is not expected to be permanent. Any such request **should not be considered under this Scheme.**

Managers should deal with this type of request in a sympathetic and supportive manner bearing in mind both the needs of the employee and of the service. Any agreement made for a temporary change should set out clearly (in writing) the time limit agreed and should be monitored on a regular basis. If an agreed temporary change becomes a permanent requirement then an application should be made in accordance with the Right to Request Flexible Working Scheme.

If in doubt contact your Human Resources section for advice.

Who considers the application?

For the purpose of the scheme officers on grade GR15 or above and up to Service Director level from within the service area of the applicant should consider applications. These are referred to as the Appropriate Officer within the scheme.

Can an application be refused?

Yes, but only where a clear business reason exists. A list of such reasons can be found in 2.7 of the Scheme.

Are there time limits for consideration of requests?

Yes, these are clearly set out in Section 3.1 of the Scheme and a procedure flowchart can be found on page 8 of these guidelines. Copies of the forms referred to in the procedure are attached.

Can time limits be extended?

Yes but only if agreed between applicant and appropriate officer or if the appropriate officer is absent from work due to leave or illness when the application is received, if this is the case then the time limits will apply from the date of the return of the appropriate officer or 28 days after the application was made whichever is the soonest.

How do I consider a request?

You must hold a meeting with the applicant; the exact procedure to be followed is contained in Section 3.1 of the Scheme.

Can an applicant be accompanied to the meeting?

Yes, either by a work colleague or Trade Union Representative, who can speak to the meeting and confer with the applicant but cannot answer any questions on their behalf, (See Section 3.1 of the Scheme).

Can an applicant appeal if I refuse the request?

Yes, the procedure and time limits are set out in Section 3.1 of the Scheme.

Who hears the appeal?

The Group Director or Service Director from within the service area, together with Human Resources will be present in an advisory capacity.

Can an application be withdrawn?

Yes, but there are only 3 circumstances under which an application can be withdrawn and these are set out in Section 3.3 of the Scheme.

PROCEDURE FLOWCHART – HOW DOES THE PROCESS WORK?

