

**THE RIGHT TO REQUEST FLEXIBLE WORKING
AND/OR
TIME-OFF FOR TRAINING POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

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1. THE RIGHT TO REQUEST

The right to request falls into two categories:

- the right to request an alteration to working hours, practices or unpaid time off for training, (see the Staff Development Policy for paid time off for training) and;
- the right to have a request considered by an employer and a response formally communicated to an employee, whatever the decision.

1.1. RIGHT TO REQUEST FLEXIBLE WORKING

Royal Holloway believes that its staff members are its most valuable asset and is committed to attracting and retaining the very best, and utilising all the talent and experience available. It also appreciates that the UK workforce is becoming increasingly diverse and includes a high percentage of parents and individuals with other caring responsibilities, as well as those whose interests and aspirations impact on their time. It therefore appreciates that the standard Monday to Friday, 9 am to 5 pm working week is, in many cases, incompatible with increasing demand for a better work-life balance.

The College recognises the importance of helping its employees balance their work and home life by offering flexible working arrangements that enable them to balance their working life with other priorities, including:-

- parental and other caring responsibilities
- health or disability
- education and training including life-long learning
- transport / distance from work
- arranging meetings, where possible, between core hours (10 a.m. – 4 p.m.)
- arts, sports, voluntary/charity work
- approach of retirement including the option to request flexible retirement

In turn it recognises that staffing levels must at all times remain in line with the demands of the business.

This policy statement aims to set out the ways in which flexible working can increase staff motivation, build better relationships between the College and its employees, increase the rate of retention of staff, reduce absence, attract new talent, promote work-life balance and reduce employee stress, and in doing so improve the College's efficiency, productivity and competitiveness.

The policy considers the following options. The College recognises that there may be alternatives, and that the working pattern that may suit any particular individual could be a unique one involving a combination of options:

- job-sharing or part-time working;
- annualised hours;
- compressed hours;
- flexitime;
- term-time working;
- swapping hours;
- voluntary-reduced working time;

- working from home;
- flexible shiftworking.

A description of the issues involved, taking into account the possible benefits of each kind of flexible working to both employees and the College, but also raising possible drawbacks and areas of potential concern are set out in Appendix 1.

The College has a separate Career Break (Unpaid Leave) policy and procedure.

Eligibility

This policy is open to all members of staff who wish to alter their working hours for the reasons above and have at least 26 weeks service with the College.

Although it is recognised that not all of the flexible working patterns that could be considered will be suitable for all sections of the College, there should be no arbitrary barriers. Employees with the requisite length of service in all areas and levels of the College will be considered for flexible working regardless of their age, sex, sexual orientation, race, or religion or belief, or whether they have a disability, their level of seniority, their current working pattern, or whether they are employed on a permanent or fixed-term basis.

However, there is no automatic right for employees to change to any of the flexible working patterns and each application will be considered on the basis of the particular work involved and any detrimental effect the change could have on individual, team or business performance.

The **Employment Act 2002** gives the right for employees with 26 weeks continuous service, a child under the age of 17 (18 where the child is disabled*) and parental responsibility for the child to request a change to the number of hours that they work, the times that they work or their place of work. (*A disabled child is a child who is entitled to a disability living allowance.)

The right to request flexible working is also available to employees who have a minimum of 26 weeks continuous service and who have caring responsibilities for an adult aged 18 or over who is their spouse, partner or civil partner; a relative; or someone who lives at the same address also have the right to request flexible working.

Whilst it is the College's policy to be flexible on working patterns for all its employees, it should be noted that should large numbers of applications be received, childcare and carer/dependant related applications would be given preference.

1.2 RIGHT TO REQUEST TIME OFF FOR TRAINING

Royal Holloway is fully committed to staff training and development, recognising that affording employees the opportunity to undertake study or training will benefit both the employee and the College. Encouraging employees to improve their knowledge and skills through study or training and creating an environment in which employees are encouraged to learn and develop has many positive benefits, not least of which is that the performance and productivity of the College is likely to be enhanced, thus benefiting everyone who works within it.

Eligibility

The **Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009** grants employees who have a minimum of 26 weeks' continuous service the right to make a request in relation to study or training and to have their request considered by their employer.

2. THE POLICY

2.1 Flexible Working Details

Staff will be able to request:

- a change to the hours they work
- a change to the times when they are required to work
- to work from home

The right enables members of staff with the qualifying service to request to work flexibly. It does not provide an *automatic* right to work flexibly as there will always be circumstances when the College is unable to accommodate the member of staff's desired work pattern.

The right is designed to meet the needs of both employees and employers, and aims to facilitate discussion and encourage both the employee and the employer to consider flexible working patterns and to find a solution that suits them both. The employee has a responsibility to think carefully about their desired working pattern when making an application and the employer is required to follow a specific procedure to ensure requests are considered seriously.

2.2 Time Off for Training Details

Employees will be able to submit a request in relation to any type of study or training, provided that they can reasonably demonstrate that the study or training is likely to lead to an improvement in their effectiveness at work, and consequently an improvement in the performance of the business.

Requests can be made either in relation to an accredited programme leading to the award of a recognised qualification, or in relation to unaccredited training that will help the employee to develop specific skills relevant to his/her job. The proposed training can be conducted in any location and at any time, and can be supervised or unsupervised. However, it must be relevant to the employee's employment within the College.

2.3 Who can apply?

All staff will have the right under the College policy to request to work flexibly or to request time off for training providing they meet the criterion of a minimum length of service of 26 weeks with the College. The College has a duty to consider their applications seriously.

Requests from employees with the requisite length of service in all areas and levels of the College will be considered in line with prevailing legislation regardless of their age, sex, sexual orientation, race, or religion or belief, or whether they have a disability, their level of seniority, their current working pattern, or whether they are employed on a permanent or fixed-term basis.

However, there is no automatic right for employees to have their requests granted and each application will be considered on the basis of the particular work involved and any detrimental effect the change could have on individual, team or business performance.

In order to make a request under the College policy staff will:

- not be an agency worker,
- not be a member of the armed forces,
- not have made another application to work flexibly or to take time off for training in accordance with their rights during the past twelve months unless there are clear exceptional circumstances.

Flexible working request related to children

- in the case of requesting flexible working related to children, the applicant should be either:
 - the child's mother, father, adopter, guardian or foster parent, or
 - married to or the partner of the child's mother, father, adopter, guardian or foster parent and have worked with their employer continuously for at least 26 weeks at the date the application is made, or
- have or expect to have responsibility for the child's upbringing, or
- be making the application to enable them to care for the child.

Should staff make more than one application within 12 months, the College will consider exceptional circumstances seriously.

3. THE PROCEDURES

3.1 FLEXIBLE WORKING

3.1.1 How to apply for Flexible Working

Staff must make an application in writing to the Human Resources Department. If a request for flexible working has been made, staff may not make a further request for flexible working to the College until a period of 12 months has elapsed from the date on which the previous request for flexible working was made. Should staff make more than one application within 12 months, the College will consider exceptional circumstances seriously.

Please note that the College's agreement to a request for flexible working will normally result in a permanent change to the member of staff's terms and conditions of employment. This is because, for example, it may be necessary to appoint another member of staff to cover any reduction in hours.

3.1.2 What details should be included?

A request for flexible working must satisfy the following conditions.

It should:

1. be a written request. Where a written notice must be provided, such a written notice can be delivered by means of electronic communication (e.g. e-mail).
2. state whether a previous request for flexible working has been made to the employer and, if so, when.

3. be dated.
4. state that it is a request for flexible working.
5. specify the flexible working arrangement (e.g. part-time work) that is being requested and the date on which it is proposed that the employee should begin to work under that arrangement.
6. explain what effect, if any, the employee thinks their request would have on their employer and how in their opinion any such effect may be dealt with.
7. for applications regarding children, explain how they meet the criteria for having a certain relationship with the child concerned (e.g. they are a parent of the child).

Guideline forms for use in these procedures are available from the Human Resources Department on request.

3.1.3 On what day has the request for Flexible Working been made?

The manner in which the request is made will determine the day that the request for flexible working has been made as follows:

The day that a request for flexible working has been made is the day on which it is received by the College (e.g. the day on which the request is handed directly/mailed to the manager or Human Resources Department).

Where a request for flexible working is sent to the employer by post, the request shall be taken as made on the day on which that request would be delivered to the employer in the ordinary course of post.

3.1.4 What should the College do and by when?

A meeting to discuss the matter should take place within a maximum of 28 days with the official response being given within 14 days of the meeting. It is anticipated that the majority of cases will be dealt with well within this timescale. The employee can bring another employee of the College, such as a local trades union representative or workplace colleague, to accompany them, should they wish.

The College will use its best endeavours to ensure that the first meeting and the final response take place as soon as possible after the completed application is received. The College encourages employees to contact their line managers and the Human Resources Department in advance if they are considering making an application for flexible working as this can assist the application process to progress more quickly.

3.2 TIME OFF FOR TRAINING

3.2.1 How to apply for Time Off for Training

Staff who wish to submit a request in relation to study or training should do so in writing to the Human Resources Department. If a request for time off for training has been made, staff may not make a further request for time off for training to the College until a period of 12 months has elapsed from the date on which the previous request for time off for training was made.

Should staff make more than one application within 12 months, the College will consider exceptional circumstances seriously.

3.2.2 What details should be included?

A request for time off for training must satisfy the following conditions.

It should:

- be a written request (e-mail is acceptable).
- state whether a previous request for time off for training has been made to the employer and, if so, when.
- be dated.
- state that it is a request for time off for training.
- specify the type of study or training and that it is relevant to the employee's employment within the College.
- reasonably demonstrate that the study or training is likely to lead to an improvement in effectiveness at work, and consequently an improvement in the performance of the College's business.
- state whether the request is for an accredited programme leading to the award of a recognised qualification, or in relation to unaccredited training that it will help the employee to develop specific skills relevant to their job.
- state where and when the proposed training will be conducted and whether it will be supervised or unsupervised.

3.2.3 On what day has the request for Time Off for Training been made?

The day that a request for time off for training has been made is the day on which it is received by the College (e.g. the day on which the request is handed directly/emailed to the manager or Human Resources Department).

However, the manner in which the request was made will determine the day that the request for time off for training has been made (see below).

Where a request for time off for training is sent to the employer by post, the request shall be taken as made on the day on which that request would be delivered to the employer in the ordinary course of post.

3.2.4 What should the College do and by when?

Where a valid request has been submitted, the employee's manager will arrange a meeting with the employee to discuss the request as soon as practicable. The employee can bring another employee of the College, such as a local trades union representative or workplace colleague, to accompany them, should they wish.

The meeting will normally take place no later than 28 days after the date on which the request was submitted. The purpose of the meeting will be to discuss the request, its appropriateness to the employee's job and the needs of the business and any possible alternative arrangements that might meet the employee's training needs. A decision will be given to the employee in writing within 14 days of the meeting.

The College will endeavour, wherever possible, to accommodate an employee's request in relation to study or training, provided that the needs of the business are not likely to be adversely affected if the request is granted.

Each request will be dealt with individually, taking into account the nature of the employee's request and any likely effects of granting it, e.g. any effects on the employee's work or on the employee's colleagues. Agreeing to one employee's request will not set a precedent or create a right for other employees to have their requests in relation to study or training granted.

The notice confirming that the request has been granted must state:

- the subject of the study or training.
- where and when it will take place.
- who will provide or supervise it.
- what qualification it will lead to.
- whether the employee will be paid for the time spent studying or training.
- whether any changes will be made to the employee's working hours to accommodate the study or training.
- how the training costs will be met.

Any time off for training agreed through this policy and procedure will be unpaid. Training that is job related and agreed through the College's Staff Development Policy may include paid time off work. Further details are available on the Human Resources Staff Development web pages. Although the College encourages employees to undertake courses of study or training that are relevant to their employment, it will not always be possible to grant requests in relation to study or training. The circumstances in which the College may have to refuse a request must include one or more of the following reasons:

- the proposed study or training would be unlikely to improve the employee's effectiveness at work, or the performance of the business itself;
- the cost to the business of granting time off for training would be too great;
- granting the employee's request would have a detrimental effect on the organisation's ability to meet customer demand;
- inability to recruit additional staff,
- the employer would be unable satisfactorily to cover the employee's absences on training;
- insufficiency of work during the periods the employee proposes to work
- there would be a detrimental impact on quality or performance; or
- there are planned structural changes in the College

The response refusing the request must specify reasons, in sufficient detail to enable the applicant to understand why the application has been refused, in line with the policy.

4. THE APPEAL PROCEDURE

4.1 Can staff appeal against the decision?

- 4.1.1 Yes. If an employee's request in relation to flexible working, study or training is refused, the employee will have the right to appeal against this decision to

a more senior manager who was not involved in the decision to refuse the request. Any appeal should be submitted within 14 days of the decision to refuse the request. The appeal notice must be in writing and must include the grounds on which the employee wishes to base the appeal.

FLEXIBLE WORKING OPTIONS

Job-sharing - *What is it?*

An arrangement whereby two part-time employees share the responsibilities of one position.

In a 'shared responsibility' arrangement the individuals both carry out all the duties of the job, simply picking up the work where the other one left off, while in a 'divided responsibility' arrangement the duties of the position are divided between the two individuals, with each being able to provide cover for the other where necessary.

Benefits to employee

Permits more time for caring responsibilities or other commitments.

The employee works at regular, defined times, permitting arrangements in his/her free time to be made in advance.

Can allow the employee to become more accustomed to increased leisure time in the run-up to retirement.

Can permit an employee to continue with the security of regular employment while at the same time working on a self-employed basis.

Benefits to employer

Two individuals are likely to bring increased skills and expertise to the position.

Peak periods of demand can be covered by hours when the two individuals work simultaneously.

Sick leave and annual leave can be covered.

Overtime savings may be made.

Points to consider

Increased costs are likely to result from benefits (e.g. car and health benefits), training, overlap time and equipment where it cannot be shared.

The arrangement is likely to be unsuccessful unless regular communication and handovers take place between the individuals.

Account must be taken of what happens if one individual leaves.

Demands on line managers increase in line with the number of individuals for whom they have responsibility.

Notes

One individual's prolonged sickness or other absence or an issue with his/her conduct will impact on the other individual in the arrangement.

Variations

A position could be split between more than two people.

Current prevailing legislation

Equality Act 2010

Part-time working - What is it?

With Part-time working the employee is contracted to work fewer than the standard number of contractual hours per year for the type of work in question.

Benefits to employee

Employee can fit paid work around childcare and other commitments.

Can allow the employee to become more accustomed to increased leisure time in the run-up to retirement, or to supplement a pension from another employer.

Can permit an employee to continue with the security of regular employment while at the same time working on a self-employed basis.

Benefits to employer

Periods of peak demand in production or service can be targeted.

Can be useful in retaining the skills of women employees who do not wish to work full-time after maternity leave.

Points to consider

Reduced pay may not make it feasible for all employees.

There must be no less favourable treatment of part-time workers in relation to pay and other benefits such as pension, sick pay, holiday and training, unless such detrimental treatment can be objectively justified.

There is no guarantee that the College will agree to a return to full-time working and there is no obligation on the College to consider an increase in the number of hours if the individual wishes to return to full-time work. See Voluntary Reduced Working Time (V-time) below for scheme where return to full-time working is guaranteed.

Notes

A reduction in the number of hours worked may be a reasonable adjustment permitting a disabled individual to do or continue in a job.

Overtime rates will be payable only when the employee has worked beyond the normal full-time contractual hours for the position.

Variations

There is enormous variation in part-time working patterns. Examples are later start or earlier finish times, afternoons or mornings only, and fewer working days in the week.

Current prevailing legislation

Part-time Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2000
Equality Act 2010

Annualised hours – What is it?

A system whereby the employee's contractual working hours are expressed as the total number of hours to be worked over the year, allowing flexible working patterns to be worked throughout this period.

Usually the hours are divided into rostered hours, which are set, and reserve hours, when the employee can be called into work as demand dictates (and to cover unplanned work and employee absence). Payment is usually in 12 equal instalments (although some arrangements permit pay for the work actually done in the period to which the payment relates).

Benefits to employee

The set hours that an employee is rostered to work will usually be known well in advance.

Offers regular salary level throughout the year even though hours of work vary.

Usually results in improved basic pay for staff (and possibly salaried status) as the new rate of pay takes into account the loss of overtime hours. Other improved benefits such as better pension, sick pay and annual holiday are often negotiated in the package.

Benefits to employer

Particularly suitable where there are predictable fluctuations in activity level for different teams over different periods, or where the situation is less predictable but workload is likely to be heavy at points throughout the year and light at others.

Greater flexibility to match staffing to the demands of work.

The working hours necessary to produce an effective customer relationship can be guaranteed.

Reduced overtime payments.

Improved productivity.

A reduction in the cost of employing temporary or bank staff.

Points to consider

Employees can be called in at short notice so may find they have less freedom in planning their leisure hours.

Long hours at particular times of the year in industries with seasonal demand can result in increased stress and absence, and difficulties for employees with caring responsibilities.

Overtime opportunities for employees are reduced or non-existent so can no longer be used as an incentive.

The employer may find itself paying for hours not actually used.

Effective communication may be a problem, especially where rostering arrangements mean individuals are away from work for long periods at a time.

Demands on administrative time and resources are often high.

The need for overtime may not be removed completely.

Notes

Annualised hours are rarely available on an individual basis. The option is usually introduced to provide greater flexibility in the way work is organised to accommodate peaks and troughs in demand for an organisation's product or service.

An arrangement on overtime may need to be agreed. Similarly there will need to be an agreement on what happens to reserve hours that have not been used throughout the year.

Adopting an annualised hours system requires careful planning and communication, and will usually require union agreement and a lengthy period of employee consultation.

Account must be taken of what happens when an employee leaves part way through a year.

Averaged pay will affect the calculation of maternity and other benefits.

Variations

Some systems work over a three- or six-month period rather than a full year.

Current prevailing legislation

Working Time Regulations 1998
National Minimum Wage Act 1998

Compressed hours - *What is it?*

Compressed hours permit employees to work their total number of contractual hours over fewer than the normal number of working days. Usually a five-day week is compressed into four days or four and a half days, or a 10-day fortnight into nine days

Benefits to employee

An extra day per week/fortnight is freed up for the employee to pursue a hobby or further education, or spend time with dependants.

No reduction in pay.

Benefits to employer

Quiet periods of work can be used more effectively if the employee's time off is arranged to coincide with them.

Staff cover can be extended beyond the normal hours of work.

Points to consider

working long hours can cause fatigue and affect performance, and may reduce the advantages of the scheme.

Working outside of office hours can provide quiet uninterrupted time for tasks that require sustained concentration that may be more difficult during busy core hours.

Notes

Where service cover has been extended by longer hours, consideration needs to be given to what will happen if the employee no longer wants to continue with the arrangement.

Where more than one employee within a team wishes to work compressed hours, a rota may be necessary to ensure fairness, as some days (usually Monday and Friday) will be more popular choices for time off.

Current prevailing legislation

Working Time Regulations 1998

Flexitime - What is it?

Flexitime is a system that permits flexibility of working hours at the beginning and end of a day or shift.

The employee must work designated 'core hours' and complete an agreed number of hours over an agreed period, usually a month. The most common core hours are 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. and 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. The scheme might then allow a start time from 7.30 a.m. onwards and a finish time up to 7.30 p.m.

The employee is normally permitted to carry over a specified number of credit or debit hours into the following month. For example, where the contracted hours are 140 hours a month and the margin is 10 hours, the employee will be able to work a minimum of 130 hours and a maximum of 150 and carry over up to 10 hours of credit or debit into the next month.

Benefits to employee

Increased scope to manage work and personal commitments.

Depending on the rules of the scheme, credit hours may be turned into full days off work.

Travel to and from work may be easier and cheaper outside peak hours.

Some people are naturally early or late risers and their working day can be fitted around these natural rhythms.

Tasks requiring concentration can be undertaken during the quiet extended parts of the working day.

Benefits to employer

Flexitime can act as a recruitment and retention aid.

Staff cover can be extended beyond the normal hours of work.

Individual control over the start and end of the working day can be particularly helpful for those with caring responsibilities - such a scheme can therefore assist both men and women in fulfilling such responsibilities and help promote equal opportunities.

Points to consider

An accurate system of recording the hours worked is required.

Depending on business requirements, it may be necessary to stipulate that adequate cover is provided during the flexi period.

Working long hours can cause fatigue and affect performance.

Unless the scheme is handled with care, additional burdens may be placed on some team members or customer service may suffer at particular times.

Current prevailing legislation

Working Time Regulations 1998

Term-time working - What is it?

Term-time working is a system whereby the employee works under a permanent contract, but can take unpaid leave of absence during the school holidays.

Salary is usually paid in 12 equal monthly instalments. The contract usually specifies that no annual holiday should be taken during term time.

Benefits to employee

The problem of finding childcare during school holidays is removed, and the employee can spend more time with his/her children during this time.

Offers regular salary level throughout the year.

Benefits to employer

The recruitment and retention of individuals whose childcare responsibilities might otherwise keep them out of the employment market is made possible. This is particularly valuable in areas where recruitment is hard, and as a means of attracting women back to work after maternity leave.

Points to consider

Other employees may be put under pressure not to take their annual holiday during the school holidays.

The reduction in pay could act as a disincentive.

Averaged pay will affect the calculation of maternity and other benefits.

Where a long break from employment would be disruptive to the job or service provided, or where the employee has unique knowledge or skills that are needed on a consistent basis throughout the year, this system may be unsuitable.

Notes

In some industries students on holiday from college/university can be recruited to cover the school holidays.

Where a managerial role is being considered for term-time working, account must be taken of whether the team involved can work extended periods without direct supervision.

Variations

Longer hours could be worked during term time and shorter hours during the school holidays to make up full-time hours.

Current prevailing legislation

Working Time Regulations 1998
National Minimum Wage Act 1998

Swapping hours - What is it?

Swapping hours is a system whereby employees can swap hours or shifts with colleagues doing the same type of work at different times of the day.

Benefits to employee

Occasional changes in hours or shift can be organised, e.g. to attend a school sports afternoon or prize giving, or to be at home for a delivery or to have repair work done.

No loss of pay.

Benefits to employer

The needs of the business or service continue to be met.

Employees are less likely to take 'sick days' to accommodate their needs, so sickness absence is reduced.

Where an employee would have taken a day's holiday to meet his/her personal needs the employer may have had to organise cover and this need is removed.

Minimal managerial involvement is necessary.

Notes

Notice-boards or the company intranet can be used by employees to advertise the shifts they want to swap. Such methods are likely to reach a wider number of potential swappers than 'word of mouth' alone.

It may not be possible or desirable to accommodate shift swaps between employees who are paid at different rates.

Current prevailing legislation

Working Time Regulations 1998

Voluntary reduced working time (V-time) - What is it?

V-time is a system whereby it is agreed that the employee will work reduced hours for a certain period of time, with a return to full-time hours at the end of this period.

Salary, pension, holiday and other benefits are pro rated during this time.

Benefits to employee

A temporary reduction in hours allows an employee to accommodate a specific event in his/her life, e.g. a course of study or a relative's illness, but to return to the security of a full-time position.

Benefits to employer

The employee's skills are retained on a reduced basis at a point when they might otherwise have been lost completely, and regained on a full-time basis when the agreed period comes to an end.

The system could also act as a means of permitting an employee recovering from an illness or adjusting to an impairment to return to work on a phased basis.

Variations

Although the variation in hours is usually temporary it may also be permanent.

Employees could also volunteer to increase their hours.

Current prevailing legislation

Working Time Regulations 1998
Equality Act 2010

Working from home - What is it?

A system whereby the employee carries out all or a proportion of his/her duties from home rather than on the employer's premises.

It may consist of the occasional day at home to coincide with a domestic requirement, or a regular arrangement of several days a week.

Benefits to employee

Travel time and costs are reduced, often resulting in a reduction in stress.

The system may permit more flexible hours, e.g. the employee may be able to start work earlier as a result of no longer having to commute to work.

The employee may be able to move away from his/her place of work to take advantage of cheaper house prices or a different lifestyle. Commuting from, for example, Salisbury to London may not be feasible on a daily basis, but could be if the commute is required only once or twice a week and for the remainder of the time the employee works at home.

Benefits to employer

A wider catchment area for recruitment is created.

Employees who move out of the immediate vicinity of the workplace may be retained.

Productivity can be increased by reducing working time lost to traffic jams and train and bus delays.

Employees who do not have to commute to work may start their working day more mentally alert.

Desk and equipment sharing can save on costs.

The system may make work more feasible for an individual with a disability affecting mobility.

Points to consider

A higher degree of trust may need to be placed in the employee as direct supervision of his/her activities will no longer be possible.

Unless it is clear at which times the employee can be contacted at home regarding work, work time may overspill into the employee's leisure time.

Employee motivation may be an issue if they are working in isolation.

The employee may begin to feel isolated and out of touch with the workplace and the rest of the team.

Communication may deteriorate, particularly if the individual rarely visits the employer's premises.

Notes

The system is often utilised by mobile employees, such as salespeople, who spend a large proportion of their working time away from the employer's premises.

New technology is increasing the range of work for which home working may be suitable.

The employer will need to carry out risk assessments of the employee's work station and ensure that he/she is working safely.

It must be made clear whether the employer or the employee is responsible for any necessary furniture, IT equipment or extra phone lines.

The employer will need to ensure adequate insurance of all its property.

Mortgage or rental agreements may prohibit working from home, so these should be checked.

Where it is necessary for the employee to take confidential material home, thought should be given to provision for its storage. Safeguards to ensure that other people cannot access computer systems may also need to be considered.

For the initial period of their employment, new employees will probably have to spend the majority of their time on the employer's premises to familiarise themselves with the role and procedures.

Care must be taken that employees working from home are not overlooked for training or promotion.

A trial basis may be helpful.

The company's IT service may need to be developed so that an effective service for home workers is provided. The employee's own IT skills may need to be improved so that he/she is able to resolve any problems that arise.

A change in the employee's personal circumstances, e.g. if he/she becomes a parent or moves to a smaller house, may make home working more difficult, so the suitability of the arrangement may need to be reviewed on a regular basis.

The impact of the employee's absence from the workplace on other employees in the team must be considered carefully.

Current prevailing legislation

Working Time Regulations 1998

Health and Safety at work Act 1974

Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999

Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992

Flexible shiftworking - What is it?

Flexible shiftworking is a variation on the traditional, fairly rigid, shiftwork system whereby employees can negotiate the shifts that suit their needs and/or rearrange shifts amongst themselves.

Benefits to employee

Occasional changes in shift can be organised to accommodate a particular need or event in an employee's life and/or employees can request changes to the shift rota to suit their individual needs.

Job satisfaction increases when employees' personal requirements are taken into account.

Where partners or relatives are employed by the same employer, greater control over the shift patterns they work means they can share caring responsibilities.

Benefits to employer

The needs of the business or service continue to be met.

Employees are less likely to take 'sick days' to accommodate their needs, so sickness absence is reduced.

Points to consider

Demands on administrative time and resources may increase.

It may not be possible to accommodate all employees' requirements and preferences.

Notes

A person to whom employees who wish to change their working pattern must apply should be specified.

Variations

Employees' personal requirements may include part-time working, evenings or nights only, day-time only or shifts that coordinate with those of their partner or another relative.

Current prevailing legislation

Working Time Regulations 1998