

Business in the Community Flexible Working Policy

May 2012

Overview

Business in the Community recognises the benefits of providing the widest possible range of appropriate flexible working patterns to staff. It enables the organisation to recruit and retain a more diverse workforce providing greater scope for work life balance and enhances productivity. The use of flexible working also enables staff to benefit from greater control over their workload, including when, where and how they work. Flexible working can, for example, enable staff to more effectively combine work with family life, part-time study or training, voluntary work or reduce their working hours in the run-up to retirement. Having a flexible workforce can also help the organisation reduce its environmental impact.

This document provides information on eligibility and the types of flexible working options available. In addition, it sets out the process for making both permanent and ad-hoc changes to working practices. It can be read in conjunction with the more detailed support document: *Flexible Working - Guidance for Staff and Managers on Making and Handling Requests*, available on HR.net.

Eligibility

All employees with six months service are able to apply for a permanent change to their working arrangements. Although certain employees (for example those who have parental responsibility for children, or adult caring responsibilities) have a legal right to apply, the organisation recognises that flexibility is an important employment solution for many staff at different points in their lives. Although there is no automatic right for employees to change to any flexible working patterns, BITC will work on the premise that many roles in the organisation lend themselves to some form of flexibility and full consideration will be given to each application in order to assess if the way of working proposed will allow operational requirements to be fulfilled. If the request is not suitable, then managers and applicants will, where possible, try and work out a compromise. Employees should normally make not more than one request a year.



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Flexible Working Options

This policy considers the following options, but the organisation 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 such as:

- part-time working
- variation to days, hours or break time
- term-time working
- job-sharing
- working from home, working from other locations or working remotely

Please note however that BITC does not operate paid overtime, flexitime or offer compressed hours.

BITC does offer staff the ability to buy or sell additional annual leave for the coming year. Further details are in the Staff Handbook on HR.net. Further information on family friendly policies and leave (for example for maternity, adoption, paternity, partner, parental, compassionate and emergency dependants leave) can be found in the relevant policies also on HR.net. Additional information on applying for unpaid leave throughout the leave year is provided in the Staff Handbook. Information on leave for volunteering activities can be found in the Community Involvement Policy on HR.net.

Definitions of Flexible Working

Part-Time

This could, for example, be 21 hours over 3 days a week, or working 5 mornings a week. For requests for a change from full-time to part-time employment the manager and the employee will discuss whether a new part-time job could be created. If this is not feasible, the manager and employee will review whether the role could be carried out using a job-share arrangement. Consideration will need to be given to where the remainder of the work will go.

Variation to Days, Hours or Break Times

Staff may wish to change the days of the week they work. Staff may request to work a different start and finish time around personal circumstances, provided that there is adequate cover in the office, for example, 8.30 am to 4.30 pm. Individuals may also wish to change their break time. However, staff are still required to work a set time each day and those working five or more hours a day will still be required to take a lunch break of one hour. Ad hoc arrangements can be made with managers as the need arises. Permanent changes will require a flexible working request.

Term Time Hours

Term time hours 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 twelve equal monthly instalments, although the employee could also be paid only for the time worked, and could receive no pay during the holidays.

Job-Share

Job sharing is 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, for example working 2.5 days per week each. However, ideally an overlap in working days is recommended.

Home Working

Home working is a system whereby the employee carries out all or a proportion of his/her duties from home rather than on the employer's premises. If a request is made for home working, the employee and their manager will undertake an assessment process before agreeing that the individual may work from home. The assessment will cover:

- Whether the employee has the skills and competences required for successful home based working
- Whether the role is suitable or can be adapted for home working
- Whether the home environment is suitable (in terms of equipment available and Health and Safety issues)

Further information is available in the Home working Policy on HR.net.

Procedure

Making a formal request

To make a formal request you need to complete the *Application for Change of Working Pattern* (in Appendix 1 or on HR.net) and submit it to your line manager. You must make this application as far in advance as possible of the date you wish the proposed change to start. Three months in advance is not unreasonable, particularly if the organisation needs to consider a job share arrangement.

You will need to give details of the arrangement you are proposing and what impact you think this will have on BITC and other colleagues. You will then need to set out how they think the effect on the business and on colleagues can be dealt with and you need to give your manager as much support as possible in finding solutions. Your proposals will be discussed in a meeting with your line manager, at which you have the right to be accompanied by a work colleague or certified trade union representative.

Dealing with a formal request

You will need to take into account a number of criteria including (but not limited to) the following:

- the cost of the proposed arrangement
- effect on members/clients
- the effect of the proposed arrangement on other staff
- the level of supervision that you require
- the structure of the department and staff resources
- other issues specific to your team or department
- an analysis of the tasks specific to the role, including their frequency and duration
- an analysis of the workload of the role
- Impact on quality and performance

The following workflow shows a summary of the approval process for a permanent change to working practices and further information is in the Flexible Working Guidance document.

Line Manager receives written request (the *Application for Change of Working Pattern* form)

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Line Manager has 28 days to consider the request, investigate implications and arrange a meeting with the applicant to discuss the proposal. The individual has a right to be accompanied by a work colleague or trade union representative, if they so wish and they must be informed of this right. HR can provide support in this meeting if required.

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Line Manager notifies the decision within 14 days of this meeting

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If the request is agreed HR will confirm the details in writing

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If the change is refused, the Line Manager will explain the business justification for the decision

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Employee has the right to appeal within 14 days. The employee has the right to be accompanied at the appeal hearing by a work colleague or trade union representative.

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Line manager and employee meet to discuss the appeal in 14 days

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HR will provide written confirmation of the decision

Ad-Hoc or Temporary Changes to Working Patterns

Individuals may also benefit from flexibility on a more ad-hoc and short-term basis. All staff regardless of their length of service can request some flexibility on an adhoc basis. Examples of such requests might be to vary working days, for a work or personal reason, or start and end times to cope with a travel or domestic issue, or to work from home for the day in order to coincide with a domestic requirement or work on a specific project. Individuals are asked to be reasonable in their requests and give consideration to the impact of their request on the business, their line manager and their team members. Reasonable advance notice (for example a week) should be given to enable the manager and employee to agree a suitable outcome.

Managers may also, on occasion, require staff to work beyond their contractual hours. Reasonable effort will be made to give employees advance notice of the requirement and line managers will ensure time off is considered, provided the needs of the business allow it. All time off in lieu must be approved by a line manager in advance. An individual cannot unilaterally decide that they are entitled to time off in lieu. Any days or half days granted as time off in lieu must be taken within three months of the days being awarded. They cannot be accumulated and added to an individual's annual leave allowance.

The Process: Making and Dealing With a Request

Employees are asked to be reasonable in their requests and give consideration to the impact of their request on the business, their line manager and their team members. Reasonable advance notice (for example a week) should be given to enable the manager and employee to agree a suitable outcome. Managers and staff should agree in advance how the individual will stay in contact with others whilst working flexibly.

Managers may also, on occasion, require staff to work beyond their contractual hours. Reasonable effort will be made to give employees advance notice of the requirement and line managers will ensure that compensatory time off is considered, provided the needs of the business allow it. All time off in lieu must be approved by a line manager in advance. An individual cannot unilaterally decide that they are entitled to time off in lieu. Any days or half days granted as time off in lieu must be taken within three months of the days being awarded. They cannot be accumulated and added to an individual's annual leave allowance.

Further information

More detailed information is in the document *Flexible Working - Guidance for staff and managers on making and handling requests* and can be found on HR.net. Alternatively the HR team will assist with any queries or concerns. The HR team also offer support and guidance to staff on applying for flexible working and to managers on managing agile teams.

Appendix 1: Application for change of working pattern

To:

From:

I would like to apply to work a flexible working pattern that is different to my current working pattern. My reason is (please tick appropriate box):

- I have parental responsibility for children
- I have adult caring responsibilities
- I want to work flexibly for another reason, if so please specify:

.....
.....

My current working pattern (days/hours/times worked) is:

I would like to work the following pattern in the future (days/hours/times worked):

I would like this working pattern to commence from:

Date:.....

Impact of new working pattern

I think this change in my working pattern will affect Business in the Community and my colleagues as follows:

Accommodating the new working pattern

I think the effect on Business in the Community and colleagues can be dealt with as follows:

Signed..... Date.....

Review of application for change to working pattern:

Meeting held on:

Present:

Decision taken: **Accept/Refuse** Request

Authorised by: Name.....

Date.....

Signed.....

Reasons for refusal:

Acceptance:

Details of new working pattern agreed:

Start date:

Trial Period:

Any further action required?

For HR use:

Employee written to:

Database amended:

Payroll informed (if required):

Line Manager written to: