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Flexible Working Policy

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We are committed to providing equality of opportunity in employment and to developing work practices and policies that support work-life balance. We recognise that, in addition to helping balance work and personal lives, flexible working can raise staff morale, reduce absenteeism, and improve our use and retention of staff.

This Flexible Working Policy gives employees the chance to formally request a change to their working pattern and all employees an opportunity to do so informally. We encourage management to facilitate requests unless they cannot be accommodated for business or operational reasons. No-one who requests flexible working, formally or informally, will be subjected to any detriment as a result of their request.

SCOPE AND PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

This policy applies to all employees. It does not apply to agency workers, consultants, or self-employed contractors. Every employee has a statutory right to request flexible working. This right applies from the first day of employment and is recognised by the formal right to request procedure in this policy.

Employees may make an informal request for flexible working to their supervisor/Manager, who will consider the request according to our business and operational requirements in consultation with the Personnel Manager.

Employees whose requests for flexible working are accepted under the formal procedure will have permanent changes made to their contracts of employment to reflect their new working arrangements. If they do not want changes to be permanent, they can follow the informal procedure instead.

Any employee interested in flexible working is advised to request an informal meeting with HR to discuss their eligibility, the different options and the effect of their proposed work pattern on colleagues and service delivery before submitting a formal or informal request.

FORMS OF FLEXIBLE WORKING

Flexible working is a broad term used to describe any working arrangement that meets the needs of both the employee and the employer regarding when, where and how an employee works. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- part-time working
- homeworking
- hybrid working
- flexitime
- job sharing
- compressed hours
- annualised hours
- term-time working
- team-based rostering

Flexible working can incorporate a number of changes to working arrangements:

- A reduction or variation of working hours.
- A reduction of the number of days worked each week; and/or
- Working from a different location, *e.g.* from home.

Such changes may involve: starting a job share; working a set number of hours a year, rather than a week (annualised hours); working from home (whether for all or part of the week); working only during term-time (part-year working); working compressed hours; working flexi-time.

ELIGIBILITY TO APPLY FOR FLEXIBLE WORKING UNDER THE FORMAL PROCEDURE

Every employee has a statutory right to request flexible working. This right applies from the first day of employment.

An employee may make up to two statutory requests for flexible working within any 12-month period.

MAKING A FORMAL FLEXIBLE WORKING REQUEST

You will need to submit a written application if you would like your flexible working request to be considered under the Formal Procedure.

Your written and dated application must be submitted to HR in writing to meet the requirements of the formal procedure. A request must be in writing and state that it is a statutory request for flexible working. It must include:

- the date of the request
- the change the employee is requesting to the terms and conditions of their employment in relation to their hours, times or place of work
- the date the employee would like the change to come into effect
- if and when the employee has made a previous request for flexible working to the employer

To help the manager consider your request, we would recommend you also:

- State the reason for your request, whether to care for a child or adult.
- Give details of the demands of your caring responsibilities.

Provide as much information as you can about your current and desired working pattern, including working days, hours and start and finish times, and give the date from which you want your desired working pattern to start.

Address the effect such changes to your working pattern will have on the work that you do, on that of your colleagues and on service delivery. If you have any suggestions to manage any potentially negative effects, please include these in your written application.

- Submit your request at least 2 months before you wish the changes you are requesting to take effect unless it is not reasonably practicable to do so.

HR may be able to agree your proposal without the need for a meeting (which is the next stage of the formal procedure). If that is the case, they will write to you, confirming the decision and explaining the permanent changes that will be made to your contract of employment.

If your proposal cannot be accommodated, you and your manager may be able to agree on a variation on this proposal that is mutually satisfactory.

SHIFT PATTERNS

To accommodate flexible working requests, whilst ensuring continuity for management and other processes, the following shift patterns are available:

- 0800 – 1645 (1600 Friday) – Standard Shift
- 0830 – 1600 (15 mins break 10:00, 30 mins lunch 13:00)
- 0915 – 1430 (15 mins break 10:00, 30 mins lunch 13:00)

Please note: the above will apply to new requests. Where existing shift patterns differ from the standard shift, we reserve the right to alter these with appropriate notice.

FORMAL PROCEDURE — MEETING

Where necessary, HR will arrange to meet with you within 28 days of your application being submitted. A Manager or Director will also attend the meeting, to take notes and to advise on procedural matters.

You may bring a colleague (who may be a trade union representative) to the meeting as a companion if you wish. Your companion will be entitled to speak during the meeting and confer privately with you but may not answer questions on your behalf.

We will ensure that the meeting is held at a time and place that is convenient to you. In most cases, the meeting will be held at your usual place of work. The meeting will be used to consider the working arrangements you have requested. You will be able to explain how the arrangements will accommodate your caring responsibilities. You will also be able to discuss what impact your proposed working arrangements will have on your work and that of your colleagues. If the arrangements you have requested cannot be accommodated, discussion at the meeting also provides an opportunity to explore possible alternative working arrangements.

The manager may suggest starting new working arrangements under an initial trial period to ensure that they meet your needs and those of your team.

FORMAL PROCEDURE — DECISION

Following the meeting, the HR will notify you of the decision in writing within 14 days.

If your request is accepted, or where we propose an alternative to the arrangements you requested, the manager will write to you with details of the new working arrangements, details of any trial period, an explanation of changes to your contract of employment and the date on which they will commence.

You will be asked to sign and return a revised contract. This will be placed on your personnel file to confirm the variation to your terms of employment. There may also be some additional practical matters, such as arrangements for handing over work that the manager will discuss with you.

You should be aware that changes to your terms of employment will be permanent and that you cannot make more than two flexible working requests until any 12 month period.

If the manager needs more time to make a decision, they will ask for your agreement to delay the decision for up to a further 14 days. A request for an extension is likely to benefit you, *e.g.* if they need more time to investigate how your request can be accommodated or to consult several members of staff.

There will be circumstances where, due to business and operational requirements, we are unable to agree to a request. In these circumstances, the manager will write to you:

- Giving the business reason(s) for turning down your application.
- Explaining why the business reasons apply in your case; and
- Setting out the appeal procedure

The business reasons which may justify rejecting your request are:

- the burden of additional costs
- an inability to reorganise work amongst existing staff
- an inability to recruit additional staff
- a detrimental impact on quality
- a detrimental impact on performance
- a detrimental effect on ability to meet customer demand
- insufficient work available for the periods the employee proposes to work
- planned structural changes to the employer's business

FORMAL PROCEDURE — APPEAL

If your request is rejected, you have the right to appeal. Your appeal must:

- Be in writing, and be dated.
- Set out the grounds on which you are appealing; and
- Be sent to the Personnel Manager within 14 days of the date on which you received the written rejection of your request.

HR will arrange for a meeting to take place within 14 days of receipt of your appeal. The meeting will be held at a convenient time for all those attending and, as at the meeting that considered your request, you may be accompanied by a colleague. Your appeal will be heard by someone senior to the manager who took the original decision. We will tell you the outcome of your appeal within 14 days of the appeal meeting.

If your appeal is upheld:

- You will be advised of your new working arrangements, including details of any trial period, an explanation of changes to your contract of employment and the date on which these new arrangements shall come into force.
- You will be asked to sign and return a copy of the letter setting out these variations to the terms of your contract. This will be placed on your personnel file to confirm the variation to your terms of employment.
- Your supervisor/Manager may also want to discuss any outstanding practical questions about the new working arrangements with you.

If your appeal is rejected, the written decision will give the business reason(s) for our decision, and why they apply in your case.

BREACHES OF THE FORMAL PROCEDURE

There will be exceptional occasions when it is not possible to complete a stage of the procedure within the expected time limits. Where an extension of time is agreed with you, the manager will write to you confirming the extension and the date on which it will end.

In certain circumstances, a request made under the formal procedure will be deemed to have been withdrawn. This will occur if:

- you fail to attend two meetings under the Formal Procedure without reasonable cause; or
- you unreasonably refuse to provide information we require to consider your request.
- In such circumstances, the manager will write to you confirming that the request has been treated as withdrawn.

MAKING AN INFORMAL FLEXIBLE WORKING REQUEST

Workers who wish to make an informal request for flexible working may make a request to their supervisor/Manager, who will consider it according to our business and operational requirements after consulting HR. It will help your supervisor/Manager to consider your request if you:

- Make your request in writing, confirming whether you wish any change to your current working pattern to be temporary or permanent.
- Provide as much information as you can about your current and desired working pattern, including working days, hours and start and finish times, and give the date from which you want your desired working pattern to start.
- Think about what effect the changes to your working pattern will have on the work that you do and, on your colleagues, as well as on your team's service delivery. If you have any suggestions about dealing with any potentially negative effects, please include these in your written application.
- Your supervisor/Manager can consider whether they are workable; and explain the demands of your caring responsibilities, if any.

Your supervisor/Manager will advise you what steps we will take to consider your request, which may include inviting you to attend a meeting, before advising you of the outcome of your request.