

Worcester City Council

FLEXIBLE WORKING POLICY AND PROCEDURE

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Contents

1. Introduction.....	2
2. What is Flexible Working?	3
3. Who is eligible to apply for Flexible Working?	3
4. Submitting a Flexible Working Request.....	3
5. Discussing the Flexible Working Request	3
6. Responding to a Flexible Working Request.....	4
7. Right to Appeal Decision.....	5
8. Trialling New Working Arrangements	5
9. Varying an Employee’s Contract	5
Appendix 1. Application Form for Flexible Working	6

1. Introduction

This policy aims to set out for employees their right to request flexible working and how the Council will respond to such requests. The Council recognises that a better work-life balance can improve employee motivation, performance and productivity, and reduce stress. Therefore, the Council wants to support its employees to achieve a better balance between work

and their other priorities, such as caring responsibilities, leisure activities and further learning.

The Council is committed to agreeing any flexible working arrangements, provided that the needs and objectives of both the Council and the employee can be met.

2. 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. Examples include part-time working, flexi-time, job-sharing, home-working and compressed hours.

3. Who is eligible to apply for Flexible Working?

An employee can make a request for flexible working if they satisfy the qualifying conditions:

- They have 26 weeks continuous service by the date that the application is made.
- They have not submitted an application for flexible working within the previous 12 months.

4. Submitting a Flexible Working Request

Requests for changes to hours of work, place of work and / or time of work will be given serious consideration. Requests for flexible working should be made in writing on the form attached at Appendix 1.

- Employees need to state the date the request is made, the change to working conditions they are seeking and the date they would like the change to take effect;
- state whether they have made a previous application for flexible working and the date of that application;
- what change to working conditions they are seeking and how they think this may or may not impact the Council;
- state if they are making their request in relation to the Equality Act 2010, for example, as a reasonable adjustment for a disability.

Employees are only able to make only one application a year. If an application is accepted by the Council it will result in permanent changes to their terms and conditions of employment, unless it is agreed otherwise.

5. Discussing the Flexible Working Request

The line manager will arrange to meet with the employee within 28 days of receiving the written request. (This time limit may be extended with the agreement of both the employee, line manager and People Services)

At this meeting employees are encouraged on a voluntary basis to share the reason they are seeking the change as this will help us to respond in the most appropriate way.

The purpose of the meeting will be to explore the working arrangement requested in more detail, discuss how best it may be accommodated together with possible alternative working arrangements in the event that it is not possible to agree the working arrangements originally requested.

6. Responding to a Flexible Working Request

The line manager (in conjunction with People Services, where appropriate) will consider the proposed flexible working arrangements, looking at the potential benefits and adverse effects to the employee and to the Council 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 Council is committed to providing a range of appropriate working patterns. However, employees and management need to be realistic and recognise that not all flexible working options will be appropriate for all roles.

Reasons for Refusing an Application

Employers can refuse a request for any of the following reasons:

- 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
- detrimental effect on ability to meet customer demand
- insufficient work for the periods the employee proposes to work
- planned structural changes to the business.

The employee will be informed of the decision in writing within 14 days after the date of the meeting. This letter will either confirm the new working arrangements agreed to, or will set out the reasons why the application cannot be accepted.

7. Right to Appeal Decision

If the request is refused, the employee will also be advised of their right of appeal.

The employee may lodge an appeal within 14 days of being notified of their application being rejected. 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 by mutual agreement although the law requires the process to be completed within three months of the request being received. (This includes any appeals).

8. Trialling New Working Arrangements

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

The Council will reserve the right, at the end of the agreed trial period, to require the employee to revert to their previous working arrangement.

9. 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. An amendment to contract letter will be sent to the employee within 28 days of the change to the employee's working pattern being agreed.

Appendix 1. Application Form for Flexible Working

Employee Name	
Post Title	
Service Area	
Payroll Number	
Line Manager Name	

Date request submitted:		
I wish to submit a request for flexible working as detailed below.		
Have you submitted a previous request for flexible working? (If yes, please answer the next question.)	Yes	No
When did you submit your last request for flexible working?		
Pattern of working		
Please state the pattern of working you are seeking by providing information under one or more of the following three headings:		
1. I would like to reduce my working hours. Detail your current number of hours worked per week and the number of hours you would like to work per week.		
2. I would like to alter the days I work and / or the timing of my working hours. Please indicate the days / times of day you would like to work per week.		

<p>3. I would like to do all / some of my work from home. Please be precise about the number of hours and days / times of the week you would like to work at home.</p>	
<p>I would like the above change(s) to my working pattern to take effect on:</p>	<p>/ /</p>
<p>Please state the impact, if any, that you think the changes you are requesting will have on the Council's ability to run its operation and on your service area, your team, your colleagues, etc.</p>	
<p>(continue on separate sheet if necessary)</p> 	
<p>Please state how you think any such impact might be countered?</p>	
<p>I am submitting a flexible working request. The Council will contact me to arrange a meeting, which will take place within 28 days of this application being submitted, to discuss the new pattern of working I have requested. If my request is granted, it will change the terms and conditions of my employment, normally for a minimum of 12 months, unless agreed otherwise.</p>	
<p>I have provided as much information as I can about my desired working pattern, including how it will meet the Council's needs and objectives.</p>	
<p>Signed:</p>	<p>Date:</p>