

CASTLEREAGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

FLEXIBLE WORKING HOURS SCHEME



Revised June 06

1 BASIC PRINCIPLES OF FLEXIBLE WORKING HOURS

The main aim of Flexible working hours is to provide a more flexible system of work attendance for employees. The basic concept of flexi is that the number of hours which individuals work on flexi time, will be the same in total as those worked as part of weekly contracted hours. The main difference, however is that, within such a scheme, there is considerable scope for those participating to vary their working times. For example, their arrival and departure times from work, the length and time taken as a lunch break, additional time off if extra working hours have been accumulated, going into deficit hours etc.

The guiding and overriding principle is that flexibility must be achieved without any adverse impact on the overall efficiency of the participating department, or in the service offered to the public. The ethos of the scheme is that both management and the staff alike benefit from more flexible working arrangements, leading to a better service being offered to the public including the staffing of offices over the lunch-time period.

2 SCOPE OF THE POLICY

The Policy will apply to staff where deemed appropriate by management (see exceptions at paragraph 4), including permanent and temporary employees.

Part-time employees will be included in the scheme on a pro rata basis. The necessary modifications must be agreed in advance of operation.

Employees who wish to continue with the standard office hours are free to do so.

The application of the scheme is subject to the demands and requirements of the service and is at the discretion of the Line Manager.

Individual flexible working patterns requested by employees to accommodate childcare arrangements will be considered outside of this Policy in accordance with Flexible Working (Regulations) (NI) 2002. Please contact Human Resources for further information.

3 STAFFING LEVELS, AND APPROVAL TO WORK OUTSIDE OFFICE HOURS

To ensure that the flexible working hours scheme operates satisfactorily, and that a high standard of service is maintained it is essential that:-

- A minimum number of employees in each section are in attendance throughout the normal office hours ie 8.45 am – 5.00 pm. This number must be agreed in advance between employees and the Head of Department, and must be strictly adhered to.

- Employees may start earlier than the normal starting time (8.45 am) or remain later than the normal finishing time (5.00 pm) subject to obtaining prior approval from their line manager in order to ensure that there is sufficient work available.

4 EXEMPTION FROM THE SCHEME

The Council reserves the right, after consultation with any employee or their representative, to determine which employees (or groups of employees) may have to remain exempt from the scheme due to the nature of their work.

Due to operational requirements, the scheme will not be applicable to those designations whose hours of work are set for a reason e.g. public office opening hours, shift arrangements, task and finish, annualised hours, priority response time, team working, where supervising arrangements are not flexible etc. (These are examples of circumstances in which flexible working hours will not be applied and the list is neither exhaustive nor exclusive).

5 MODIFIED FLEXI TIME ARRANGEMENTS

Some posts, may be able to operate the flexible working hours scheme in a modified form (that is a lesser or greater degree of flexibility than the full scheme details). Departments must liaise with the Human Resource Manager in respect of such arrangements in order to facilitate a consistent approach across the Council. Such modified arrangements will be presented for consideration to the Council's Management Team in the first instance. The Human Resource Manager will maintain a list of those posts to which the scheme is applicable and details of posts approved by the Management Team to use a modified scheme.

6 ACCOUNTING PERIOD

The accounting period for flexible working hours will be a *calendar month*. Any new member of staff joining the scheme in the middle of an accounting period will record their hours for the remainder of that time frame.

7 RECORDING FLEXI TIME AND MONTHLY MONITORING CHECKS

All employees shall be required to use the computerised flexi sheet in order to record working hours. Computerised access to flexi records shall be restricted to the employee, their line manager and/or other designated monitoring officer, and the Senior Manager/Director of that department.

At the end of the calendar month (accounting period), the computerised flexi sheet will automatically carry forward the balance (credit or debit) to the next month. On a monthly basis, each flexi sheet will be checked by the line manager,

or other designated monitoring officer, and viewed by their line manager for approval.

Withdrawal from the scheme may occur if any employee does not complete their flexi sheet on a daily basis.

8 FLEXIBLE WORKING HOURS – CORE PERIODS

The scheme will operate between 8.00 am and 6.00 pm.

Within the overall scheme a designated number of hours each day have been determined as core hours.

Core time is deemed to be the essential part of the working day, during which all employees must be in attendance at their work unless they have prior permission from their line manager.

The core working times are as follows:-

Monday to Friday 10.00 am to 12.00 noon and 2.00 pm to 4.00 pm

The flexible working bands, during which employees may report in for work or depart, are as follows:-

Arrival - between the hours of 8.00 am to 10.00 am

Lunch - between the hours of 12.00 noon to 2.00 pm

Departure - between the hours of 4.00 pm to 6.00 pm.

9 LUNCH BREAK

Please note that a minimum lunch break of 30 minutes must be taken by all employees participating in the scheme.

10 CARRYING FORWARD OF HOURS

Under normal circumstances, employees will not be permitted to carry forward more than a maximum credit or deficit of 11 hours in any one accounting period.

11 EXCESS FLEXI LEAVE

Any excess credit in any one accounting period above the maximum of 11 hours limit will normally be lost.

A carry over balance in excess of 11 hours will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances. No manager is permitted to authorise an additional balance over 11 hours for any employee in two consecutive months.

12 DEBIT OF FLEXI LEAVE

In certain circumstances the authorising officer may authorise the carry forward of more than 11 hours debit, but normally any excess will be deducted from the employee's annual leave entitlement on the basis of one half day (3 hours 42 minutes), or multiples thereof, until the individual's flexi-time debit is not greater than the maximum number of permitted hours. In exceptional circumstances the excess will be treated as special unpaid leave and deducted from salary (with the prior agreement of the authorising officer). Persistent abuse of this section of the scheme may also result in disciplinary action.

13 TAKING OF FLEXI LEAVE

Any credit leave can be taken as either a half or a full days flexi leave, as appropriate, with a maximum of one and a half days flexi leave being taken in any one accounting period ie calendar month.

As is the case with annual leave, such absences must be authorised in advance by the Line Manager and will be subject to the exigencies of the service. Therefore, time off cannot be guaranteed.

No additional flexi balance over one and a half days will be authorised for leave within an accounting period, unless the employee can demonstrate an unusually busy period operationally. No manager is permitted to authorise more than one and half days flexi leave for any employee in two consecutive months.

Flexi leave may be taken either in lieu of excess hours accrued, or in anticipation of hours which will be made up later in the accounting period.

When taking a half days flexi leave, the leave period should not run over into more than one core period. For example, after a morning's leave employees can arrive at the office at any time during the flexible lunch break ie 12.00 – 2.00 pm, but no later. When taking an afternoon off, employees may depart at any time during the flexible lunch period.

There is no requirement to take a lunch break when taking a half days morning or afternoon leave.

14 AUTHORISED, AND OTHER TYPES OF ABSENCE

Annual leave, bank and other holidays, and sickness will be credited to the flexi record, the time being related to the standard working day (7 hours 25 minutes or

7 hours 20 minutes for a Friday). A half day of annual leave will consist of 3 hours 42 minutes.

NB The computerized flexi sheet includes automatic credits for the above examples, except for a half day's annual leave which should be input by the user to total a credit of 3 hours and 42 minutes.

15 OVERTIME / TIME OF IN LIEU (TOIL)

Overtime (TOIL for those officers not eligible for overtime) shall not commence before 6 pm ie core time of the scheme. Therefore, where overtime is claimed (with prior approval from line management), flexi must be recorded as finishing at 6 pm. Similarly where an officer is not eligible for overtime, TOIL (Time Off In Lieu) shall only be accumulated after 6 pm.

There is a clear distinction between extra hours worked by individuals as part of the flexible working hours arrangements, and additional attendance outside core time which may attract overtime payments or time off in lieu if appropriate.

Before starting an overtime / TOIL period, employees must record on the flexi sheet the time which normal flexi work has ended.

Please note: Hours credited to the flexi time total will not attract a payment of overtime as an alternative to credit leave. Likewise attendance which is authorised as overtime / TOIL should not be added to the flexi time total.

16 EMPLOYEE MEDICAL APPOINTMENTS

In-keeping with the ethos of the flexi scheme, all employees will be expected to make arrangements, where practical, to attend such appointments outside the core hours period, and within their own time.

Where an employee is unable to arrange such appointments outside core hours, one hour will be allowed towards the appointment subject to the prior approval of the line manager. Any remaining time required will be taken from the employee's flexi time. (Statutory leave entitlement, such as is allowed for antenatal appointments, is not covered by this condition).

17 ASSIGNMENTS AWAY FROM THE OFFICE

Where an employee is travelling from home in the morning to an assignment away from the normal office base, the work starting time will be calculated as follows:-

- (a) if the office is on or near the route to the assignment, the starting time is the time at which the office base is passed.
- (b) if the assignment lies en route to the office, but closer than the office, the time begins at arrival at the assignment.
- (c) if the assignment lies in a different direction to the office, the start time will be based on the actual travel time from home to the assignment less the officer's usual travel time from home to office.

Finishing time will be similarly calculated.

Adjustments may be made for travelling time as follows;

For example:

<i>Arrival at assignment</i>	<i>9.15 am</i>
<i>(A) Journey time from home to assignment</i>	<i>30 minutes</i>
<i>(B) Journey time from home to office</i>	<i>15 minutes</i>
<i>Allowance (A-B)</i>	<i>15 minutes</i>
<i>Adjusted start time</i>	<i>9.00 am</i>

Finishing time will be similarly calculated.

For example :

<i>Leaving time from assignment</i>	<i>5.30 pm</i>
<i>(A) Journey time from assignment to home</i>	<i>30 minutes</i>
<i>(B) Journey time from office to home</i>	<i>15 minutes</i>
<i>Allowance (A-B)</i>	<i>15 minutes</i>
<i>Adjusted finish time</i>	<i>5.45 pm.</i>

18 TRAINING COURSES

Where an employee attends an all day meeting/training course etc, and were the actual time involved is less than the normal working day, they will receive the full 7 hours 25 minutes credit (7 hours 20 minutes for a Friday).

For those meetings/courses which are longer in duration, credits for more than the full band period of 8.00 am – 6.00 pm cannot be claimed by the employee concerned.

19 BREAKING OF CORE HOUR PERIODS

An employee who needs to take flexi-leave due to unforeseen exceptional circumstances (e.g. urgent domestic/caring responsibility) and has insufficient flexitime credit accrued to permit this must make application for the leave to his/her authorising officer prior to taking the leave. (If for some reason the authorising officer is not available, contact must be made by the employee with a senior officer of the employee's section).

No more than 15 hours will be given in any accounting period in respect of such circumstances. The authorising officer will keep a record of all occasions of flexi leave taken in advance and should this prove to be requested by an employee on a more regular rather than exceptional basis, such requests will be denied.

Employees will be required to build up the time (to at least the debit levels prescribed within the scheme) within a period of time prescribed by the authorising officer.

In very exceptional circumstances employees may leave work for a period of time during core times. (eg to deal with unforeseen, urgent domestic/caring responsibilities). If the employee has insufficient annual leave entitlement to enable this to be done, then the hours in excess shall be treated as unpaid leave and the deduction will be calculated in the same manner as set out at paragraph 12 (debit).

In all such circumstances prior approval to do so must be obtained from the employee's authorising officer.

20 CREDIT/DEBIT OF FLEXI TIME ON LEAVING THE COUNCIL

On receipt of notification from an Officer that he/she is leaving the Council, the Line Manager must inform the member of staff that a 'balance of hours' situation should be achieved by the last working day.

Where this balance has not been achieved, any debit balance should firstly be off set against any outstanding annual leave, and if this is not possible, the Human Resource section must be advised to allow for final pay to be adjusted accordingly, i.e. by a deduction or addition made for debit/credit balance of hours.

21 ABUSE OF THE SCHEME

The operation and control of the flexi scheme within each section will rest with the immediate Line Manager. In addition to standard monthly checks, periodic checks will also be instigated by Management to ensure that the scheme is not being abused by any one individual.

Individual employee working patterns will be reviewed regularly and employees may be removed on a temporary or permanent basis from participating in the scheme for the following reasons:

- Unauthorised time off
- Building up of credit hours where there is no evidence of increased productivity
- Persistent debit hours above permitted level

Serious abuse of the flexi scheme may be categorised as gross misconduct and, under the Council's disciplinary procedure, this could result in dismissal if proven.

22 REVIEW OF THE SCHEME

The scheme is subject to review after 6 months, when required adjustments may be made after consultation with employees and/or their representatives. It may also be withdrawn at the discretion of management, and or the Council.