

Flexi-Time Scheme

INTRODUCTION

Objective of the Scheme

The objective of the scheme is to facilitate agile and flexible working practices to enable the most efficient use of time and of council buildings and premises. It also allows employees a degree of flexibility in adjusting how/when they work their contracted hours to suit their personal circumstances and in addition contributes to the maintenance/improvement of work/life balance, job satisfaction and performance.

General

The scheme is for Local Government non-term time employees however certain employee groups will not be allowed to participate in the scheme due to operational needs. Chief Officers also have access the scheme.

The scheme needs rules to help ensure its consistent application and these are set out in this document but equally important to its successful operation is that managers and employees work together to ensure that working time is arranged to allow those in the scheme to enjoy its benefits without any impact on, or reduction in, the quality of service we provide.

The examples given to illustrate the working of the scheme are generally based on employees with a standard working week ie 36¼ hours a week, 7¼ hours a day, Monday to Friday. However many people in the scheme work non-standard weeks and/or hours eg reduced or compressed hours and variations for them will be highlighted.

The scheme allows considerable flexibility but the over-riding principle is that employees must arrange their times of work according to their workload and the pattern of work in their directorate/service. A manager may request an employee to work at specified times to meet operational needs provided that they give 24 hours' notice.

Offices must remain open to the public during normal office hours (usually 0845 to 1700*) and be adequately staffed at all times. Generally employees are expected to arrange/agree such cover between themselves, however if they cannot do so, their manager must ensure appropriate arrangements are in place.

Working Hours

The standard bandwidth ie daily period covered by the scheme (including Saturday and Sunday for homeworking) is 0700 to 2000 (13 hours). The ability to work these hours in council premises will be dependent on the building being open. However, where circumstances demand it, heads of service may require particular categories of employee to work within a specified bandwidth to meet operational need.

In the case of home workers in Workstyles 3, 4 and 5 the standard bandwidth will not apply, however all hours worked must be recorded and should not exceed the maximum limits outlined below.

Working hours are defined as those hours within the working day during which the employee is required to be at work. For the purposes of the scheme no core working hours are specified. However, employees must work a minimum of 3 hours and no more than 10 hours a day. Where circumstances demand it, heads of service may require particular categories of employee to follow specified working hours, or work a minimum number of hours per day, which may be at specified times, to meet operational needs.

An employee's workload should mean that the hours they work will not vary greatly from their contracted hours but in any event they should avoid building up large debit or credit balances in their hours.

Employees must take a minimum break of 30 minutes if they work more than six hours. Managers must make sure that there is appropriate operational cover during breaks.

Accounting Period

Accounting Periods are recorded in blocks of four weeks. At the end of each Accounting Period recorded hours are checked against contracted hours – 145 hours for those on a standard working week. Different totals may apply to those on a non-standard working week.

Standard Times

For the purposes of crediting annual leave, sickness and other authorised absences, as well as for deducting time-off, the Standard Times are:

Week	36 hours 15 minutes
Day	7 hours 15 minutes
Half Day (am)	3 hours 38 minutes
Half Day (pm)	3 hours 37 minutes

Those who work non-standard hours may have different Standard Times.

Credit and Debit Balances

Credit/debit balances up to a maximum of 11 hours (for those working standard hours) may be carried forward from one Accounting Period to the next.

This will be pro-rata for staff who work reduced hours e.g. contracted for 20 hours per week so can carry forward 5.40 hours.

Any credit balance held at the end of an Accounting Period which is more than the maximum allowed will be lost.

A debit balance in excess of the maximum allowed will be deemed unpaid absence. An employee who persistently accumulates debit balances above the maximum allowed, without a satisfactory explanation, is likely to face disciplinary action and/or exclusion from the Scheme.

1.5 working days, based on an employee's daily contracted hours, may be taken as flexi leave within an accounting period subject to operational needs. In exceptional circumstances an employee can request flexi leave even if they do not have a sufficient credit balance, however any time off should not take a debit balance beyond the maximum allowed.

Wherever possible, an employee should not have a credit or debit balance when their employment ends or if they change jobs within the council unless otherwise agreed with their new line manager).

Absences and Leave

The Standard Times described above are credited for absences as detailed in the Employees' Operating Instructions.

If an employee is taken ill during the day the balance of their standard day not worked will be credited.

Overtime

Overtime payments will only be made for authorised hours worked before or after bandwidth hours ie 0700 to 2000. Payment will only be made for such hours if an employee does not have a debit balance (excluding overtime hours) greater than the maximum allowed. Overtime does not count as credit time under the scheme however, in certain circumstances, managers have the discretion to offset the time worked (at the appropriate overtime rate) against a debit balance.

Unsocial Hours

If a home working employee chooses to work unsocial hours ie between 2200 and 0700, either whole or in part, the hours worked should be recorded, but there will be no entitlement to receive 'unsocial hours' enhancements of allowances in respect of these hours.

Time Off In Lieu (TOIL)

Where compensatory time off in lieu (TOIL) has been approved in place of overtime payment, or for additional hours worked, this must be recorded on the appropriate form.

Miscellaneous

Abuse of the scheme will be dealt with in accordance with the council's disciplinary procedure. The accurate recording of hours is the responsibility of each individual employee. Under no circumstance may an employee record hours worked on behalf of another employee. This constitutes gross misconduct and the employees concerned will be liable to summary dismissal.

If an employee has a complaint about the scheme's operation which cannot be resolved informally, they may raise it through the council's grievance procedure.

The Data Protection Act stipulates that data must be obtained and processed fairly and lawfully, only be held for specific purposes and not used or disclosed in any way incompatible with these purposes. This means, amongst other things, that information about the scheme should only be used for work-related purposes.

The council reserves the right to suspend the scheme.