

## Introduction

The Flexi-time guidance includes the procedure and guidance in relation to the following:

- What is flexi time
- The scope of the scheme
- Guiding principals
- Application of the scheme

## Aims of the Guidance

To provide clear guidelines for managers, and employees to follow to utilise flexi-time appropriately, supporting a culture of service delivery which focuses on the achievement of agreed targets and objectives.

## Scope

The scheme is applicable to all employees whose working hours/practices allow for flexible working hours to be implemented, it is however recognised that there are employees whose working hours/practices dictate that the policy cannot apply or may need to be modified. Employees working part-time or reduced hours have access to the scheme, usually on a pro-rata basis.

## To be read in conjunction with:

- Work Life Balance Policy
- Flexi and Annual Leave Tracker Guidance
- Working Time Guidance

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## POLICY

Newport City Councils corporate vision is 'to be recognised as a high performing council – ensuring the right services are provided to our communities, our councillors and our staff', to achieve this, new ways of working have to be found to make the best use of staff and resources. Newport City Council recognises that flexible working brings benefits to both employer and employee. Flexible working arrangements can assist in addressing pressures by maximising the availability of staff and improving customer service.

The Flexi-time scheme allows for a flexible system of attendance to help employees manage their daily hours of work to suit their workload and home life. The objective of the scheme is to:

- enable the Authority to better meet the needs of their residents,
- allow for greater flexibility in the management of flexitime,
- achieve a better balance between work and home life,
- improve the health and wellbeing of employees

which by extension, reduce absenteeism, increase productivity and enhance employee engagement and loyalty.

### Definition of terms

In describing the flexi-time scheme a number of terms are used which may be unfamiliar to employees. In order to avoid confusion over their meaning the most common terms are explained as follows:

**Bandwidth** - The bandwidth sets out the potential time that an employee can work ranging from the earliest time anyone can start through the latest possible finishing time. Under this scheme the bandwidth is 7.00 am to 7.00 pm.

**Public opening times** - The times during which most offices will be operational, cover must be maintained during this period. Under this scheme Normal Office Hours are 8.30 am to 5.00 pm.

**Core Hours** - The hours of the working day that employees must be present and available to work. Under this scheme there are no set core hours.

**Accounting period** - The period at the end of which it is necessary to assess how many hours were worked compared with the actual hours. Flexi-time can be accrued and taken in the same accounting period.

**Standard hours** – This is the total number of hours each employee is contracted to work each week. Standard office hours for most of the authority are 8.30 am to 5.00 pm.

**Credit hours** - Credit hours are those which arise from the employee having worked more hours at the end of the accounting period than is standard. Credit hours of more than 16 (pro rata) at the end of the accounting period will be lost.

**Debit hours** - Debit hours are those which arise from the employee having worked less hours at the end of the accounting period than standard hours. The maximum debit hours that you can have at the end of an accounting period is 8 (pro rata)

**Carry over balance** - The scheme allows employees to work more or less than the contracted hours in an accounting period. Where this occurs, provision is made for the difference to be adjusted in the following period. Under this scheme the number of credit hours that can be carried over to the next settlement period is 16 and the number of debit hours is 8. This will be on a pro rata basis for part time employees.

**Recording systems** – For the majority of employees, hours worked are recorded in the flexi and annual leave tracker, the tracker shows credit and debit hours and is used to record working hours, it also enables managers to monitor how many hours over/under the standard working week an employee has worked. Employees are responsible for updating and maintaining the flexi and annual leave tracker, any employee found to be abusing this trust will be dealt with under the Disciplinary Code. Any attempt to falsify hours will be regarded as gross misconduct.

**Business absence** – This is applicable to employees whose work takes them away from the office on Council business, employees should make their manager aware of their location and commitments including perceived times of departure and arrival. Employees are responsible for ensuring this time is recorded accurately, any abuse of the system will be deemed to be gross misconduct and dealt with under the Councils Disciplinary Procedure.

### Application of the scheme

The success of the Flexi-time scheme depends on trust, common sense and the goodwill of both employees and managers. Employees are expected to plan their times of work around business needs as well as their personal workload and the patterns of work of colleagues to ensure office cover and the delivery of services. A manager may require an employee to work at specified times during the bandwidth on any day if service delivery demands, managers may require employees to work outside of the bandwidth in certain circumstances, where the demands of the service occur outside this time. Managers should agree minimum staffing levels, and the process for agreeing time off and 'normal' working hours for employees so that cover is maintained.

### Constraints of the Flexi-time scheme

Although flexi-time will bring benefits to the employee, time off may be refused by managers if minimum staffing levels are not met. Employees should, where possible give reasonable notice of intent to take flexi-time. Flexi-time is intended to support the needs of the organisation and assist with work/life balance for employees, it is not intended to be used as a mechanism for accruing additional leave. The flexibility of the scheme allows employees to manage peaks and troughs of workload and it is not expected that employees will regularly work the full bandwidth. Employees are expected to be mindful of their own wellbeing and not regularly work excessive hours. In addition, managers will regularly monitor their teams flexi and annual leave tracker in order to ensure that excessive amounts of debit and credits

are not accrued and that optimum productivity is achieved. Flexi-time should only be accrued where employees are required to work longer hours as a result of heavy workload, abuse of the scheme could result in flexi-time being withdrawn, it could also be deemed as gross misconduct and dealt with under the Councils Disciplinary Procedure. Flexi-time is not a mechanism to amend working patterns. Adjustments to hours of work may be granted by management on an ad hoc basis, however requests to alter working patterns either permanently or on a fixed term basis should be done via the Work Life Balance policy.

### **Lunch Breaks**

Upholding the principles of the Working Time Directive (1998), employees should take a break when working more than six hours. A minimum break of 30 minutes should be taken approximately mid-way through the working day and not at the beginning or end of the working day, subject to business needs.

### **Smoke Breaks**

All breaks from work must be recorded, departure and arrival times should be recorded in the flexi and annual leave tracker.

### **Religious Observances**

Managers should, where operationally possible, assist employees to meet their religious observances. This consideration should be taken in line with annual leave and/or flexi-leave for specific days but should also be considered for any daily religious observances. Any break from work must be recorded in the flexi and annual leave tracker.

### **Standard Working Week**

The standard working week for full time employees is 37 hours, for part-time employees it is their weekly part-time hours. Employees can work in excess of these hours where there is a business need, however due regard must be taken of the Working Time Regulations which sets a maximum working week of 48 hours averaged over a 17-week period. Employees can work in excess of 48 hours where there is the business need, however they must 'opt out' of the Working Time Regulations by signing a waiver. Employees must ensure that an 11-hour break from work is taken each day, in accordance with the Working Time Regulations.

Employees can work less than their standard working week where business needs allow, however employees are required to manage their time appropriately to avoid large fluctuations in credit and debit hours.

### **Flexi-leave**

Flexi time is primarily designed to allow employees to balance work and home life commitments and address business needs. Where an employee has accrued credit time, they may wish to take it back as flexi-leave. Flexi-leave must be approved by line managers and where possible be pre-booked, however there may be occasions where emergency leave may need to be taken.

The maximum amount of flexi-leave that can be taken in any 4-week period is 2 days or 4 half days or a combination of half and full days providing it does not exceed 2 full days.

Flexi-leave can only be taken where an employee will not exceed 8 hours' debit and will usually be agreed in-line with business needs.

Flexi-leave must be recorded on the flexi and annual leave tracker, any attempt to falsify hours will be regarded as gross misconduct and dealt with under the Councils disciplinary procedure

### **Medical Appointments.**

Employees should arrange medical appointments, including dental and GP appointments, outside of normal office hours where possible. Where this is not possible, authorization should be sought from line managers.

For hospital appointments that cannot be arranged outside of normal office hours, authorization for time off must be approved by the line manager and can be taken as flexi-time/flexi-leave (or annual leave or unpaid leave if in excess of 2 days).

Time off for ante natal care will be granted, this includes time off for partners to attend up to 2 ante natal appointments. Antenatal care may include relaxation and parent craft classes that the employee's doctor, midwife or health visitor has advised them to attend in addition to medical examinations. Paid time off for such appointments does not include travel time to and from the appointment.

### **Phased Return**

When an employee returns to work following a period of sickness absence, the Council will follow medical advice in relation to a recommended phased return. The council supports a period of no longer than a two working weeks for phased return, which will be at no less than 50% of the employees contracted hours for week 1 and no less than 75% of the employees contracted hours for week 2. The employee will receive full pay during this period.

Employees should only claim their standard working hours during their phased return (as actual hours worked and the top-up to contracted hours). In the event that an employee works more than the agreed hours during the phased return period, they will not be able to claim these 'additional' hours as flexi time as they are already being paid full working hours.

### **Travelling Time**

Where an employee spends part of a day on site and either travels directly from home to site or directly from site to home, the time recorded should take in to account the employee's normal commute (the time which the employee would have spent travelling between their home and the office); employees should always deduct their normal home to work travelling time.

Employees attending external training/seminars/conferences or meetings away from their base will be given a credit for the hours attended including **additional** travelling time; employees should always deduct their normal home to work travelling time.

### Managers Responsibilities

Managers are responsible for ensuring that there is adequate cover at all times in locations where the Flexible Working Hours Scheme operates, setting out expectations of cover and the process for requesting flexi-time. Managers are also responsible for the correct implementation of the scheme and should carry out random audits on the employees' time recording system, electronic or hardcopy. In order to comply with the Working Time Regulations 1998, Managers should also monitor working hours in line with this piece of legislation. Managers should always consider these Regulations when asking employees to work longer hours and agreeing flexi-leave.

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### Document Control

Version	Date	Author	Notes/Changes
V1.1	01/09/2016	Human Resources	New policy
v.1.2	01/01/2017	Human Resources	Click to enter text
V1.3	01/10/2017	Human Resources	Policy update

v.2	25/03/2020	Human Resources	Version control added
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