

# Managers' Guidance Covid-19

## Interim flexible working arrangements



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The list below gives examples of flexible working arrangements that can be considered if requested by a member of your team as a means to easing any concerns or constraints they may have about coming back into the workplace.

It is important to say that the needs of the business should be taken into account before agreeing to any change. In the current circumstances, it would be advisable to agree any changes to work pattern/schedules on a temporary, local basis rather than through a contractual change. Using a range of flexible working arrangements will help you ensure that the workplace remains safe and that physical distancing rules are adhered to.

#### Examples of flexible working:

- Vary working hours, work doesn't need to be carried out during normal 9am-5pm business hours
- Staggered start and finish times, for example, to avoid rush hour on public transport. This may mean that working hours will be out with 8am – 6pm
- Longer days to avoid attendance five days per week in the office, this is like compressed hours and will help with your staff rotation in the office
- Two shift approach, for example, early and late
- Change to working days, for example, work over the weekend if this helps with childcare responsibilities. You will need to consider if this is the workplace or at home and check the office will be open at weekends.
- Combination of working from home and attending the office
- A combination of any of the above.

This list isn't exhaustive but intended to give you a flavour of the flexibility that is available. Please note that in these circumstances, it is **not** anticipated that any change to working patterns would attract any NSWPs payments even if it included working at weekends or beyond 8pm. This is because any changes will be arrangements which you can offer to your employees as a reasonable adjustment that you are putting in place to help support individuals fulfil their contract of employment due to these exceptional circumstances. They're outside their normal terms and conditions and taken in an attempt to support them and with their agreement.

You must remain within conditions of service unless you have employee agreement with these temporary modifications. If you need any guidance on these matters then please refer to your Service HR Team.

#### Adjusting to new ways of working

It is recognised that having a more flexible way of working may take a bit of adjusting and we need to consider any barriers at manager, team and individual levels to help successfully implement flexible working. Taking each in turn, you will find this advice helpful on how to overcome potential obstacles.

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#### Manager barriers

- You may be unclear about how to measure work and output during this time, especially if remote or flexible working is new. It's vital to have a trusting relationship for flexible working to be successful.
- You should understand that visibility is not the key to performance and that you explore new ways of communicating, delegating and working with your teams to meet targets and deadlines.
- You should set clear expectations for your team, for example through a work plan. This could mean sharing examples of how you expect tasks to be done and being clear about deadlines and priorities.
- Good communication is vital. In addition to regular catch ups, ask open questions such as 'are you feeling fulfilled in the work you do?' and 'how can I support you better?' to overcome any barriers or communication problems.
- You need to find a balance between allowing flexibility and facilitating collaboration; if team members have opposing hours you will need to find ways to overcome this.

#### Team barriers

As a manager you should pay close attention to:

- **Lack of team relationships and networking:** Flexible working may contribute to a lack of colleague interaction and team connections, which could lead to flexible workers feeling isolated. This will be especially true while we adapt to widespread remote working and physical distancing measures.
- **Encourage teams to connect using online tools:** having regular catch ups and making use of technology to keep others informed of their progress on projects and their current workload. Support a healthy level of communication and collaboration, but ensure that employees do not feel under pressure to be 'always on' as teams may have a variety of work patterns now in place.
- **Share success stories:** Ensure that learning is captured and transferred from the implementation of flexible working elsewhere in the council. Take note of what has worked well and what has not worked well and why, so that managers learn from successes and mistakes.
- **Additional workload:** Support supervisors and managers with the perceived additional load of managing flexible and remote workers - help them to think through how best to manage the team using technology and other ways to capture progress.

#### Individual Barriers

As a manager you should:

- Help individuals understand what flexible working opportunities are appropriate and available at this time. Ensure that individuals who are required to attend a workplace also have flexible working opportunities, for example, the ability to avoid peak hours.

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- Communicate with individuals regularly about altering flexible working when necessary, and being watchful to ensure they aren't working too many hours, are having appropriate breaks and have the technology they need.
- Help individuals understand that their personal circumstances will be taken into account when you are developing the rota and your aim will be to create a schedule that suits the individual as well as the business.