

# Flexible Working

## 1. The Purpose

This policy sets out the Forestry Commission's approach to handling employee requests for flexible working arrangements. It applies to all Forestry Commission staff who have a statutory right to make a flexible working request, that is those with at least 26 weeks continuous service.

Please note that where a change to an employee's working hours/pattern is requested as a potential reasonable adjustment, it is not intended that requests are made under the HR Policy and Procedure – Flexible Working. Employees should discuss a request of this nature with their line manager in the first instance. Please see the [Reasonable Adjustments](#) page for further information.

## 2. The Principles

The principles of the policy are to:

- promote a healthy work/life balance within the Forestry Commission (FC) and consider all flexible working requests from eligible employees;
- consider each flexible working request on its own merits, taking into account the impact and operational needs of the business ;
- ensure that management decisions are fair, objective and non-discriminatory, in line with FC values and the Civil Service Code; and
- promote best practice across the FC and ensure compliance with relevant legislation and the ACAS Code of Practice.

## 3. The Policy

The FC recognises the importance of balancing work and home life and accommodates a range of flexible working arrangements to help employees achieve this. Flexible working covers a range of different types of arrangements for organising your working time, whether it be the number of hours worked, the number of days attended and/or the pattern or location of the work (see [Section 3.1](#)).

There is no automatic right to work flexibly. Each request will be considered individually, taking into account the nature of the job, as well as the current structure, organisation, operational requirements and priorities of the team at the time that the request is made.

Normally, employees can only submit one flexible working request in a 12 month period and the process that should be followed is set out in [HR Procedure – Flexible Working](#).

This policy and the associated procedure have been developed in consultation with the Forestry Commission Trade Unions (FCTU).

## 3.1 Types of Flexible Working

There are many different forms of flexible working. Some of the more common flexible working patterns are:

### 3.1.1 Part-time Working

A part-time employee is contracted to work less than the standard working week of 37 hours net (non-operational) or 44 hours net (operational). The number of working days, daily hours and start/finish times can vary.

### 3.1.2 Annualised Hours Contracts

An annualised hours contract is where an employee works a certain number of hours over the whole year but with a certain degree of flexibility about when these hours are worked. Normally, a period of regular hours or planned shifts form the core of the arrangement, with the remaining time left unallocated, to be used on an 'as needed' basis. The expected total amount of annual hours determines the employee's annual salary and they are paid the same amount each month for their 'average' hours, although there is recognition by both the employee and their line manager that monthly hours will fluctuate. Annualised hours contracts are often used where there are variations in demand over the year.

### 3.1.3 Term-time Working

Term-time working is a form of annualised hours, where an employee does not work during school holidays but is paid the same amount of salary each month.

### 3.1.4 Compressed Working Weeks/Fortnights

A compressed week/fortnight is where an employee works full-time hours over fewer working days than the standard working pattern. For example, an employee may work a four-day week or a nine-day fortnight.

### 3.1.5 Staggered Working Hours

Staggered working hours is where an employee has different start, finish and/or break times than the standard working pattern. This can be an effective means of covering longer opening hours.

## 3.2 Your Responsibilities as an Employee

You are expected to:

- familiarise yourself with this policy and the associated procedure;
- understand that you have the right to request a flexible working pattern, however there is no automatic right to work flexibly;
- submit any flexible working request well before the proposed start date;
- ensure your application is well thought out taking into account the potential impact on the business as well as your own preferences;
- be open to discussion if your manager is unable to fully accommodate your proposed working pattern but is able to offer alternatives;
- be willing to undertake the proposed working pattern on a trial basis where your manager has reservations as to how well this could work in practice;
- accept that if your request to work flexibly is agreed, this will normally be a permanent change to your terms and conditions of employment, unless agreed otherwise; and
- remain flexible, wherever possible, to attend meetings or performance reviews, undertake training and to provide cover for absent colleagues.

## 3.3 Your Responsibilities as a Manager

You are expected to:

- make sure that you and your team are aware of and understand this policy and the associated procedure;
- be open-minded and objective in your approach to flexible working requests, including any appeals, considering them carefully and in line with the timescale and process set out in [HR Procedure – Flexible Working](#);
- clearly communicate and keep a record of your decisions;
- provide justifiable reasons if an employees request cannot be accommodated, ensuring that requests are only declined where one or more of the business grounds as detailed in [HR Procedure – Flexible Working](#) is applicable; and
- ensure that all employees are kept up-to-date with work-related matters and are not at any detriment as a result of their flexible working pattern.

## 3.4 Human Resources Responsibilities

Human Resources have responsibility for:

- providing advice and guidance to managers on the application of this policy and the associated procedure;
- confirming any changes to the employee's terms and conditions of employment as a result of an agreed flexible working arrangement; and

- monitoring and reviewing this policy and the associated procedure, in consultation with the FC Trade Unions.