

A Guide to Flexible Working

GMCVO

Caring,
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What are the types of flexible working?

As both interest in and the benefits of flexible working become more widely known, the number of reports and fact sheets about flexible working is increasing. The Caring, Working, Living Panel, made up of both employers and employment support organisations, reviewed a number of examples to consider how best to present this wealth of information to employers.

The following information is intended to provide more detailed context to our visual guide, for employers less familiar with how to offer flexible working solutions. It can be found [here](#).

The Legal Position

All employees have the legal right to request flexible working once they have worked for the same employer for 26 weeks.

Part-time working



Work is generally considered part-time when employees are contracted anything less than full-time hours. Part time workers must not be treated less favourably than a full time worker doing the same or similar work.

Potential benefits

- » Customer demands can be met and machinery can be used more efficiently if part-time workers cover lunch breaks/evening shifts and weekends
- » The working day can be arranged around caring responsibilities and/or other commitments
- » Employees can continue to work while increasing their own leisure time

Potential challenges

- » Increase in administrative, recruitment and development costs e.g. recruiting two part-timers could take longer than one full-timer
- » Providing a continuous level of service may be difficult

Term-time working



A worker remains on a permanent contract but can take paid/unpaid leave during school holidays. Salary can be paid either in 12 equal monthly instalments or the employee could be paid for time worked and when annual leave is actually taken.

Potential benefits

- » Can solve the problem of child care for parents
- » Structured working gives employers plenty of time to plan ahead to cover absence
- » Can be a way to attract women back in to work

Potential challenges

- » Long absences during prime holiday time may make it difficult to arrange cover
- » Can put pressure on other colleagues who feel they cannot take leave during school holiday periods

Annual hours



The total number of hours to be worked over the year is fixed but there is variation over the year in the length of the working day and week.

Employees may or may not have an element of choice over working patterns. Typically, the times an employee is contracted to work are split into:

- » set shifts which cover the majority of the year
- » unallocated shifts which the employee can be asked to work at short notice

In some systems the employee is paid for unallocated shifts and 'owes' the time to the company. The company holds these hours or 'payback' shifts in reserve and can ask employees to work them at short notice, to cover for colleagues or to cope with a peak in demand.

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Calculating annualised hours:

Methods can vary but a typical formula is;

1. the number of weeks per year
2. less any annual leave entitlement
3. multiplied by the number of working hours per week.

Example:

Based on a 40-hour working week and the statutory entitlement to 5.6 weeks annual leave per year:

1. length of year is 52 weeks
2. less annual leave of 5.6 weeks, making 46.4 weeks
3. multiplied by 40 working hours per week 46.4×40 hours per week = 1856 annual hours

Working from home on a regular basis



Workers regularly spend time working from home. Advances in technology make it far simpler to keep in touch and work away from the employer's premises. It does require a working relationship that is based upon trust and encourages employees to manage their own work.

Potential benefits

- » Can provide savings on estates and other overheads
- » Can save on travel time and costs
- » Can allow more flexibility in the hours worked
- » Can make an employer more attractive to potential employees and can provide a wider catchment area

Potential challenges

- » Communication and trust can deteriorate when an employee rarely sees their manager
- » Homeworkers can become stressed and feel isolated
- » Homeworkers can find it hard to switch off and can become fatigued/less productive
- » Career development may suffer

Job sharing



A form of part-time working where two (or occasionally more) people share the responsibility for a job between them. They share the pay and benefits in proportion to the hours each works. Job sharers may work split days, split weeks or alternate weeks. Successful job sharing depends to a large extent on the partnership between the people sharing the role. Employees need to work well as a team and think about how their working styles complement each other.

Potential benefits

- » If one job sharer is absent, due to illness or holiday, the other can carry on with at least half the work
- » Can help meet peak demand e.g. both sharers being present when workloads are heavy
- » A wider range of skills, experience, views and ideas can be available
- » Can help people with caring responsibilities and/or other commitments to continue working

Potential challenges

- » Extra induction, training and administration costs created by additional staff
- » Replacement may be difficult if one job sharer leaves
- » Added responsibility on supervisors/managers, who must allocate work fairly and ensure that the job sharers communicate effectively
- » If the shared role involves managing or supervising, staff can find it difficult working for two managers

Flexitime



Allows employees to choose, within certain limits, when to begin and end work. On the one hand there may be a system to allow employees to build up additional hours, which can be used to leave early, come in late, or take longer periods off, with approval from line management. In other workplaces employees may be allowed to choose, usually within set limits, when to begin and end work. One way to do this is to set up **core time** when the staff member must work, plus a requirement that they work an agreed number of hours over a fixed period (often over four weeks). Outside any core times the employee may choose whether or not to be at work.

Potential benefits

- » Can help recruit and retain staff, and build a culture of trust
- » Can help people accommodate responsibilities from outside the workplace, and improve work life balance
- » Travel costs may be reduced where travelling outside of peak hours is possible

Potential challenges

- » Direct supervision throughout the working day may be difficult
- » Unless monitored, could lead to longer/fewer hours being worked, reducing productivity
- » Risk of being understaffed at certain points in working day if business need is not factored into flexi approval

Examples of flexitime:

- 8-10am > Flexible start time
- 10-4pm > Core time
- 4-6pm > Flexible finish time

Compressed hours



The central feature is reallocation of work into fewer and longer blocks during the week. Through starting early and/or finishing late, employees can build up additional hours which they take as a day or half day away from work.

Potential benefits

- » Can aid the recruitment and retention of staff
- » Can reduce absenteeism
- » Employees have a longer weekend/more time away from work without a reduction in pay

Potential challenges

- » Difficult to schedule work and provide sufficient cover throughout working hours
- » Can be difficult for employees to adjust back into work after a long weekend
- » Longer daily work periods can increase fatigue

Examples of compressed hours:

A typical 40 hour working week

9am to 5pm from Monday to Friday

A possible compressed 40 hour working week

9am to 6pm from Monday to Thursday 9am to 1pm on Friday

A possible compressed working fortnight (based on an average 40 hour working week)

9am to 6pm on 9 of the 10 working days. No working hours on 1 of the 10 working days

Mobile working /teleworking



This permits employees to work all or part of their working week at a location remote from the employers' workplace.

Potential benefits

- » Can provide savings on estates and other overheads
- » Can improve productivity as do not need to base travel route on employer's work place
- » Can result in lower absence and turnover rates

Potential challenges

- » Can be expensive and some people may feel socially isolated
- » Managers may find it difficult to communicate with and manage remote workers
- » Career development may suffer if away from office often
- » The recording of working time can be problematic

Get in touch

Contact Rebecca Harris to find out more about this service and other support that Caring, Working, Living can offer.