

The following information is included in the [CMI 'An Introduction to Implementing Flexible Working Hours' toolkit](#).

- Secure the commitment of top management**

The commitment of senior managers and the involvement of the HR team (if you have one) are vital to the success of flexible working. Discuss the rationale and the business case for introducing flexibility with these groups to reach agreement on the extent of flexibility and ensure alignment with current business strategies.
- Draw up a profile of the existing workforce and their current hours**

Don't assume that you have a full understanding of the current situation. For example, you may not realise the extent to which informal flexible working time is already sanctioned by line managers. Drawing up a profile of existing working patterns and hours worked will enable you to plan more effectively.
- Take cultural issues into account**

Organisational culture can hinder the successful implementation of flexible working hours. For example, a long-hours culture or a culture of presenteeism may deter employees from taking up flexible working options. On the other hand, a culture based on trust, respect and accountability will support the introduction of flexible working. Think about the existing organisational culture and whether any adjustments are needed.
- Decide the extent of flexibility to be introduced**

Consider which options will be effective and practicable within your organisation. Decide whether you want to introduce a wide range of options, or wish to limit flexibility to a fixed range. For example, if you introduce flexitime this should apply to everyone at all levels, but it is possible to specify core, non-flexible hours to ensure that staff are available for meetings or that essential tasks are covered. Once adopted, it is hard to backtrack, so consider piloting the scheme, or introducing limited options to start with and expanding the scheme gradually.
- Consult with employees**

Consult with employees to explore whether the flexible working pattern/s would be acceptable to them. You might use questionnaires, workshops or focus groups to test employees' views, gain feedback and identify any potential problems. At this stage it is important not to raise unrealistic expectations and it may be necessary to manage expectations to avoid potential future disappointment.
- Consider appointing a working group to manage implementation**

Consider selecting a group of employees of all levels and types from across the organisation to help steer the project and resolve any issues or problems. If one or more trade unions are recognised in the workplace, be sure to include union representatives as well as staff representatives. You may also choose to appoint a co-ordinator who will offer guidance and keep an overview of how the scheme is working.
- Work out the details**

Anticipate risks and potential problems by asking the working group to evaluate all the accepted options for change. Important questions to consider include:

 - » What processes will be put in place to handle requests to work flexibly?
 - » What arrangements will be needed to provide cover for essential work and meet customer expectations?
 - » How much authority will line managers have to agree to or refuse requests for business reasons?
 - » Will the scheme comply with all relevant legislation? For example, in the UK, employees with 26 weeks continuous service have the right to request to work flexibly and to have their requests dealt with in a reasonable manner and within a reasonable period. There are also specific requirements relating to the reasons given for any refusals.
 - » Are any adjustments needed in respect of the timing of meetings?
 - » Will there be any additional costs, and will these be offset by business benefits?
 - » How will you ensure parity of treatment in areas such as training and development, promotion and benefits?
- Communicate the policies to all staff**

Publicise the flexible working scheme widely prior to launch. Give details of the options available with examples to illustrate how the scheme will work in practice. It is particularly important to be clear about any areas where flexible working is deemed inappropriate or unworkable for good business reasons. This will help to avoid resentment from those who are unable to take advantage of flexible working options. Be open about any criteria for eligibility for each option, and set guidelines for their use.
- Provide training in implementing flexible working arrangements**

Make sure that managers and team leaders are fully aware of the details of the scheme and the processes involved and that they have the skills they need to manage flexible working effectively. If managers are accustomed to supervising work closely or exercising tight management controls, for example, they may need to make adjustments in management practice and style.