

Briefing number 040

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To: Branch, Section, & Sub-Section Secretaries
Equality Reps, Equality Networks
NEC Equal Opportunities Advisory Committee
Full-Time Officers

2015/00695

Flexible Working and Work-Life Balance Policies

Prospect has produced guidance for negotiators and representatives in various formats on part-time and flexible working, as well as on work-life balance. This guidance has been in the form of members' guides and updated with equality briefings and the purpose of this briefing is to bring these together into a model policy for flexible working.

A model policy is attached which is intended to guide you when revising your own workplace policies, or when discussing a new one with your employer.

A comprehensive work-life balance policy will also cover the following areas:

- Maternity, paternity, adoptive, family and parental leave
- Time off for dependants
- Special leave
- Bereavement leave
- A flexible approach to retirement
- Career breaks
- Sabbaticals
- Childcare

Resources:

Don't forget that there are additional resources with advice and guidance on Prospect's website in the [WorkTime YourTime](#) campaign. In addition:

[Members' guide No 16 to part-time and flexible working](#)
Equality Briefing No 033 with [good practice guidance on worklife balance](#).
[Prospect's Members' Guide No 20 to Homeworking](#)

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MODEL POLICY FOR FLEXIBLE WORKING

This [company/organisation] recognises the importance of providing a healthy working environment for all our employees, including facilitating arrangements to enable them to balance their work and home life. We also recognise that a healthy work-life balance benefits both the company/organisation as well as the individual. The provision of flexible working opportunities is a key mechanism towards achieving a good work-life balance.

Scope and principles

The company/organisation recognises the right of staff to request flexible working arrangements and we will aim to agree any requests to changing working patterns, wherever the business needs allow. Requests for flexible working arrangements will only be declined on business or operational reasons and this will be clearly communicated to the staff member concerned.

This policy and procedure will apply to all staff, regardless of status or length of service. We will ensure that advertisements for all vacancies include a commitment to flexible working arrangements, including part-time and job sharing opportunities, unless there are clear objectives business reasons that the job cannot be done flexibly.

This policy covers a range of provisions for flexible working arrangements, as set out below.

Flexible working arrangements

Any small variations to hours or ways of working should normally be agreed informally with line managers. A short period of part-time working may be agreed, for example, temporarily for staff returning to work after a period of long-term sickness absence or maternity leave in order to ease them back into the routine of working. Any more permanent or formal changes to working patterns, or place of work will be subject to the procedure set out in this policy.

There are a number of alternative working patterns which may be available and we will work with staff to accommodate their requests in line with business and operational needs. The following are examples of the types of flexible working which may be available:

Part-time working: i.e. working less than full time hours.

Job sharing: where 2 people "share" a job that would normally be a full-time post. The responsibilities of the post, hours, pay and benefits are shared between them. The HR department may be able to assist in matching job share partners. The company/organisation is prepared to be flexible in terms of how the working week is divided between the job share partners.

Flexible working hours and flexitime: flexible start and finish times to the working day, including core hours where staff can vary their start and finish times up to 2 hours before or after the core time (10:00 to 15:00). In agreement with line managers, hours may be built up to take time off work. Additional hours should not exceed 15 hours per month, and they

should be taken as soon as possible afterwards and within one month. Flexi leave may be carried over with the agreement of the line manager.

Compressed hours: working the total number of hours over fewer days, for example a four-day week or 9 day fortnight.

Term time working: a form of part-time working where the employee only works during school terms and is off work during the school holidays.

Homeworking: working predominantly from home, with some time spent in the office.

Annual hours: where there are set yearly hours, rather than weekly hours and there is flexibility to work at different periods throughout the year.

This company/organisation is committed to promoting work-life balance and those on alternative working patterns will not receive any less favourable treatment than full time workers. Any changes to your working arrangements will not impact upon your future training and career development opportunities with this company/organisation.

Pro rata terms and conditions will apply for part-time workers, job sharers and those working term-time contracts. Salaries for term time workers will be calculated on the basis of the total yearly salary divided into 12 equal monthly payments.

Procedure

We would encourage employees to informally discuss applications for flexible working with their line manager prior to making a formal request. The formal request must be made in writing to the line manager, and should include:

- Signature and date
- Details of the flexible working arrangements requested. You do not need to give any personal details about why you wish to change your working practices, unless you wish to do so.
- Possible impacts of the proposed change, and potential solutions
- The date on which you would like the new arrangements to apply.

The legislation enabling employees the right to request flexible working stipulates that only one application for flexible working can be made in a 12 month period. However, this company/organisation aims to be flexible in our approach, recognising that people's circumstances can change over a short period of time.

The company/organisation will aim to agree all requests within a 3 month time period. Following receipt of a formal request, line managers will:

- Acknowledge the application.
- Within 28 days, organise a meeting with you to discuss your request. Staff may be accompanied by their trade union representative.
- Consider your request carefully and in doing so will take into account the needs of the business along with your request. Each request will be considered on a case-by-case basis in the light of all the relevant circumstances, and any outcome will not set a precedent for future requests.

- If your request can be agreed, we will do so in writing. With your agreement, it may be necessary to agree the requested to change for a trial period and therefore the period for formal agreement may be extended. The length of the trial period will also be agreed with you.
- If it is not possible to agree your request, you will be notified in writing and given the business reasons why it cannot be accommodated. If this is the case, we will discuss with you any compromise solutions that may be available, including the possibility of a different role within the company/organisation.
- You have a right of appeal if you are not happy with the decision. Any appeal should be made in writing within 14 days of receiving the company/organisation's written decision.
- An appeal meeting will be held, normally within 14 days of receipt of the appeal, and you will be entitled to be accompanied by your trade union representative.
- The decision emanating from this meeting will be communicated to you in writing, within 14 days of the meeting.

The time limits set out above may be extended with agreement. Additionally, we will aim to fast track within a reasonable period of time any requests for temporary flexible working arrangements, e.g. to cover urgent caring responsibilities.

Any agreed to changes to working arrangements will become a permanent change to the employee's contract of employment, following any agreed trial period. Notwithstanding this, the company/organisation is open to further discussions with the employee in regard to reverting to full-time hours.

The legislation covering employees right to request flexible working states that employers may deem a request to be withdrawn if the employee does not attend the meeting to discuss their application, including any appeal and also a rearranged meeting without good reason. Of course, this company/organisation will make every effort to ascertain any reasons for non-attendance and try to accommodate the employee wherever possible. However, the company/organisation will close the application after 3 months if there is no further communication from the employee.

Homeworking

The company/organisation supports homeworking as an alternative work location. This may be on an ad hoc basis, with the agreement of your line manager, or a more regular, formal arrangement.

If you wish to apply to work regularly or permanently at home, then an application should be made to your line manager, in the same way as for flexible working.

If the request for homeworking is agreed, we will confirm this in writing and the date on which homeworking will commence. In addition, we will arrange for a health and safety assessment to be carried out to ensure that you have the necessary equipment and furniture in order for you to be able to carry out your duties at home. Any equipment and/or furniture deemed necessary will be provided by the company/organisation and will be reviewed on a regular basis.

Regular communications for homeworkers is essential and your line manager will agree formal communication channels with you. Homeworkers are also expected to attend the

office from time to time, for example for team meetings, other business related meetings, training events or ad hoc meetings.

The company will also discuss with you any additional costs associated with working at home and reimburse reasonable costs.

Time off in lieu

Time off in lieu will be granted if you work additional hours with the agreement of your line manager. This will be on the basis of one hour off for every additional hour worked and it should be taken as soon as possible after the additional hours have been incurred but normally no later than one month. Exceptions to this time limit will only be agreed with permission from your line manager.

Time off in lieu may also be appropriate if you are required to attend meetings or training events which fall outside your normal working hours.

Career breaks

A career break is a period of unpaid leave that can last from a few months to 5 years. Career breaks can be used either for caring responsibilities or for community service, voluntary work, sporting activities.

We will aim to guarantee a right of return to a job at the same level and we will operate a "keep in touch" scheme to ensure continued contact during the career break.

Sabbaticals

A period of leave may be granted to undertake education or research. Applications should be made in the first instance to your line manager.

We will aim to guarantee a right of return to a job at the same level and we will operate a "keep in touch" scheme to ensure continued contact during the career break.

Other policies covering work-life balance

In addition to flexible working opportunities, this company/organisation has developed a number of other policies to assist with employees' work-life balance, which can be found at [insert links]

- Maternity, paternity, adoptive, family and parental leave
- Time off for dependants
- Special leave
- Bereavement leave
- A flexible approach to retirement
- Career breaks
- Sabbaticals
- Childcare

Our commitment

The company/organisation will promote this policy to all employees and will ensure that line managers are appropriately trained to carry out the policy.

This policy will be reviewed on [date] jointly with our recognised trade union(s). Take-up of the provisions within this policy will also be monitored and reviewed on a regular basis with our recognised trade union(s).