

Flexible Working Hours Policy Work Life Balance (WLB)

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Uwch Cymru
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Version	Date	Description
0.1	05/09/2006	Presented to HR Committee – advice sought
0.2	20/09/2006	Presented to Management Board for initial approval – agreed
0.3	26/10/2006	Presented to Works Council for ratification – not ratified, further queries
0.4	29/11/2006	Presented to Management Board to discuss queries
0.5	17/01/2007	Presented to Works Council for agreement following discussion, not agreed
0.6	07/02/2007	Presented to Management Board – agreed
0.7	14/02/2007	Presented to Works Council – agreed
0.8	20/02/2007	Presented to HR Committee – approved subject to conditions
1.0	22/03/2007	Presented to Management Board with HR Committee conditions – Approved subject to changes by HR
1.1	26/09/2007	Presented to Management Board with findings from the 6 month Pilot – approved with amendments
2.0	11/10/2007	Presented to HR Committee with findings from the 6 month Pilot and Management Board comments – approved with amendments by HR
3.0	Feb 08	Policy updated to reflect OD, style guide and EIA
3.1	June 08	Policy updated in line with Audit recommendations
4.0	August 08	Policy amendments signed off by Director of F&CS

1. Introduction

In line with its commitment to valuing diversity, HEFCW recognises that flexible working hours bring benefits to both employees and the organisation. This Flexible Working Hours policy provides arrangements for a flexible system of attendance to help employees to manage their daily hours of work to suit their individual needs and the needs of the organisation.

An effective policy will enable teams to discuss and agree standard preferred patterns of working and to manage any changes of routine to avoid unnecessary disruption to the effectiveness of the organisation.

It may not always be possible to accommodate the needs of individual employees, and in these circumstances employees will be given a full explanation of the reasons for not applying full flexible working hours terms to a particular position.

No employee is specifically excluded from this policy, and it is HEFCW's policy to allow flexible working hours wherever possible. However, the requirements of certain posts may limit the extent to which this policy can apply.

This Flexible Working Hours policy is a guide for employees and line managers. It is not a definitive set of rules and line managers and employees may seek interpretation, advice or consultation either from Heads of Team or from HR as guardians of the policy, where there are exceptional or unusual circumstances.

2. Aims of the Flexible Working Hours policy

The aims of the policy are to:

- i. provide the best possible service to meet business objectives;
- ii. enable employees to utilise their full potential at work by achieving a better relationship between their personal and professional lives;
- iii. provide a focus on the achievement of key activities, personal and team objectives and targets rather than time sat at a desk;
- iv. maximise use of resources and match working patterns with the needs of HEFCW;
- v. help HEFCW retain employee expertise;
- vi. give HEFCW access to a broader cross section of potential employees when recruiting.

This policy should be seen as part of a suite of policies and initiatives providing a range of options for flexible working, details of which are summarised in HEFCW's statement on Work-Life Balance.

3. Equality of opportunity

Line managers responsible for employees participating in the policy must ensure there is no discrimination, direct or indirect, intentional or unintentional against any group or individual employee.

4. Working patterns - guidelines

- i. The maximum period during which offices will be open to employees to conduct their work will be 7.00am – 7.00pm (bandwidth). HEFCW may choose to extend or reduce these hours if circumstances permit. Conduct of work and the availability of office facilities must be with reference to personal safety considerations and the Health and Safety policy.
- ii. Time spent working outside the flexi time bandwidth must be recorded on the flexi records as 'additional time worked' with details provided in the comments field of the reasons for this additional working time. Additional time worked will not form part of the cumulative hours worked for flexi time recording purposes unless it has been pre agreed with the line manager and must be linked to a particular output or circumstance. It is expected that the occurrence of pre agreed additional time will be by exception.
- iii. Between 7.00am and 8.30am and 5.00pm and 7.00pm there will be no Reception coverage. Should employees wish to regularly work during this time this must be agreed between the line manager and employee prior to commencing such a pattern of work to ensure that it does not adversely affect the service levels expected by HEFCW.
- iv. HEFCW will not operate a system of core hours. Employees must ensure they work their contracted hours whilst taking into account the needs of the team and for HEFCW to meet the needs of the business. Employees must adhere to the Sickness Absence Policy and contact in the first instance, their line manager or, if they are unavailable, the Head of Team or a team member by 10 am on their first day of sickness. If a part day is taken as sickness, the total day must not exceed 7.24 hours.
- v. Employees working in excess of 6 hours are recommended to take a minimum of a 30 minute uninterrupted break during their working hours. Breaks can be taken at any time during the working day. These breaks will not count as work time, are unpaid and can be taken during the six hour period. Employees should ensure they take at least the minimum break recommended in the interests of health and safety.
- vi. Time taken to make coffee or tea to be consumed at the employee's workstation will count as work time. Any coffee, tea or smoking breaks taken away from the workstation will be in the employee's own time.
- vii. Employees will be given a choice about the times they work within the bandwidth subject to:
 - meeting operational and team requirements (to be agreed with line management), including accessibility to external and internal customers and clients;
 - meeting personal and team objectives and targets
 - meeting contractual hours of attendance.
- viii. Hours of work are not confined to the bandwidth where an employee may, for example, be travelling to a location other than their normal place of work, in connection with their work. A comment should be provided by the employee where this is case.

- ix. There will be a requirement to complete a formal recording of hours which must be electronically “approved” via the intranet’s flexi sheet approvals system by the employee’s line manager and viewed by the Head of Team at the end of each four week accounting period. These records will be retained on the line manager’s and Head of Team’s intranet page for a maximum period of 12 months after which time they will be destroyed. All employees will record their hours worked electronically on the spreadsheet provided.
- x. An employee whose line manager is absent for more than four weeks must contact HR to arrange for their Head of Team/Director/CEO (as appropriate) to temporarily approve their flexi sheet.
- xi. In order to address issues around workload and working patterns employees will be required to record their work locations along with their hours worked including evening and weekend working.
- xii. The focus will be on the achievement of key activities, team and personal objectives rather than time at a desk during a particular week. This focus recognises that there may be occasions when the demands on an employee relating to the achievement of an objective may result in a temporary increase in the number of hours required, with an employee working beyond their normal weekly contracted hours. This focus must also recognise that the effort required towards achieving an objective during another week may not require attendance for the contracted 37 weekly hours. Working hours are calculated on the basis of a settlement period. Each settlement period contains 20 working days (or pro rata equivalent) worked over a four week period.
- xiii. Line managers and Heads of Teams should encourage and recommend that employees take appropriate breaks and should monitor hours to ensure a sensible work-life balance is achieved. Where the recommended rest breaks are not being taken, comments should be recorded by the line manager within the comments section of the flexi approval/review box. If employees do have a build up of excess flexi credit or debit, the line manager or Head of Team should seek to address this with the employee concerned.

Flexi-credit

Based on full time hours of service, employees may carry forward a maximum of 14.8 hours (14 hours 48 minutes or the equivalent of two days) credit to the next settlement period. This may be taken as flexi leave with the prior agreement of the line manager. Credits in excess of 14.8 hours will be lost, except where these have been incurred at the request of the Head of Team to meet operational deadlines. Where there has been such a request, the line manager and Head of Team must ensure that the accumulation of hours does not exceed the Working Time Regulations of 48 hours per week.

Where a line manager authorises a credit in excess of 14.8 hours, an explanation is to be provided and must be detailed in the comments box of the flexi approval system.

Where an employee has worked in excess of their contracted hours, agreement must be reached by line managers and employees prior to any time off being taken, this should wherever possible be at least three working days in advance of the leave. Time off will be credited on an hour for hour basis (i.e. at a flat rate of 100%).

Flexi-debit

Based on full time hours of service, employees may carry forward a maximum of 11.1 hours (11 hours 6 minutes or the equivalent of 1.5 days) debit to the next settlement period. A deficit up to 11.1 hours may be discounted at the rate of 3.7 hours to a half day's leave or carried over beyond the next settlement period. This carry over is subject to informing and seeking the view of the Head of Team to ensure they are aware of the circumstances. Under exceptional circumstances, the Head of Team may also approve unpaid leave to discount a deficit in hours. When flexi-debits are being worked back, the line manager and the employee must ensure that they do not breach the 48 hour rule.

Line managers should ensure they discuss with the employee how realistic it will be for them to 'make the time up' in the future, and if this is not realistic, the flexi-debit should not be granted. Where employees are regularly carrying over debits, the line manager should spot this trend and establish whether there are any circumstances for the build up of flexi-debit. Heads of Team must be kept aware of such circumstances.

Equally, other approved absences from work (e.g. for dental or medical treatments) may be accounted for, with agreement, at 100% of the time required to attend such appointments and should not normally exceed four hours (pro-rata to hours worked) per day. Where an appointment exceeds four hours the line manager may feel it is appropriate to make the Head of Team aware. Wherever possible, employees should arrange medical or dental appointments at the beginning or end of each day, to minimise disruption to their working time. As much advance notice as possible of such appointments (where they are routine) should be given.

Please refer to the Special Leave policy for other approved absences.

5. Criteria in considering requests for flexibility in hours

In agreeing to exercise flexibility in hours, line managers and employees have an obligation to assure themselves that a request to exercise flexibility will not affect business effectiveness. Examples of aspects to consider are:

- will there be sufficient coverage of any absence by other members of the team?
- will the team still be providing the best possible service to meet business objectives ensuring no detrimental impact on quality, performance or ability to meet customer/stakeholder demand?
- can workload be temporarily reorganised amongst existing employees without detriment to them and their effectiveness?

6. Abuse of the policy

The success of the policy depends on trust and any employee found to be deliberately abusing this trust will be dealt with under HEFCW's dismissal and disciplinary procedure.

7. Working Time Regulations

Under the Working Time Regulations 1998 (SI1998/1833) 'working time' means any period during which the employee is working, is at the employer's disposal and is carrying out their activities or duties.

Working time includes:

- any period during which the employee is receiving training in connection with the job;
- travel time during the working day (eg the journey to and from a temporary workplace);
- time spent waiting at the place of work for work to be allocated;
- time spent working away from home;
- time spent working at home;
- time on call at the workplace.

Working time does not include:

- the journey to or from the normal workplace and home;
- time resting at the end of the working day even if the employee is required to stay away from home overnight;
- time spent 'on call' when away from the workplace and not carrying out duties

The Working Time Regulations and the Young Worker Directive ensure that employees under the age of 18 do not work in excess of 40 hours per week for HEFCW. All other employees whose working hours breach the 48-hour rule must sign a waiver in accordance with the Working Time Regulations.

In accounting for travel time to and from a temporary workplace, employees will work out their total travel time for the day, and reduce it by their average daily travel time to and from the office.

In accordance with HEFCW's Occupational Driving policy, it states an 'absolute maximum of 12 hours work and driving but recommends 10 hours as a preferable limit, with a requirement for anyone doing this regularly to discuss it with the Head of Resources and Office Manager.'

8. Interpretation of the rules of the policy

Any questions on the operation of the policy should be addressed in the first instance to your line manager or Head of Team. If further clarification is required, please contact HR.

9. Other

The operation of a Flexible Working Hours policy is not a contractual entitlement. HEFCW reserves the right to modify or withdraw the policy. Employees will be consulted about any proposals in this regard through the Works Council.

10. Review of policy

The Flexible Working Hours policy will be reviewed 12 monthly.

Please refer to the intranet for Flexi Timesheet Guidance notes and flexi timesheets. For part time staff, HR will issue an individual timesheet based on pattern of work.