

Management

Traditional practice	Now in 2014	Framework in practice says
Manage through attendance. If I cannot see you, I cannot manage you	Manage through what staff produce and do (deliverables/ outcomes) regardless of where they are located	We trust staff to work effectively and efficiently wherever they are. Everybody will be clear about what is expected of them in their roles Focus will shift from hours worked to what is being done Managers have a responsibility to track performance and progress with their team regardless of their location If deliverables are not being met, poor performance will be managed robustly
Traditional practice	Now in 2014	Framework in practice says
Some flexible working schemes are available	There are increased opportunities for us to work flexibly such as part-time, different working patterns	We can balance our work and other life demands better The needs of the customer and the service come first when deciding when I work

Flexible Working Request FAQs

The 'Flexible Working Request Guidance' document outlines the process for considering requests for agile working arrangements. The 'Agile Working Guidance' and 'Agile Working FAQs' documents provide information and guidance on agile working arrangements and the process for implementing these.

This 'Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)' document provides answers to some of the practical questions that can arise when flexible working is being considered and implemented. For ease of reference the FAQs are presented against the following themes.

- General
- Considering requests
- Recording changes
- Compressed working weeks
- Part-time and term-time working

This is a live document that will be amended as more questions arise, or our approach changes, as more agile working arrangements are introduced. For that reason, only an electronic version has been produced and made available on essentials. If you are using a downloaded hard copy please ensure that you have the most up-to-date version.

If you require further assistance or you have a more specific issue around agile working, contact the following:

- HR issues - HR Direct on extension 6655
- Health & Safety - via HR Direct on extension 6655
- ICT issues - Corporate ICT on extension 4321
- Telephony - Corporate ICT on extension 4321
- Mobile phone contracts - email ictsupport@camden.gov.uk

General

1. What is the process for requesting a change to my hours or working pattern?

Please refer to the Flexible Working Request Guidance and forms. Firstly speak to your manager, explain your proposal and discuss the potential benefits. Your manager might have arrangements for considering changes to working arrangements on a team basis and, if so, this will be explained to you.

For all formal requests the 'Flexible Working request form available on Essentials should be used.

To complete the form you will need explain why and how you would like to change your working arrangements.

- What would be the benefits of the change: for you and for the service
- What disadvantages could there be: for the service and for your work colleagues
- How could the disadvantages be overcome?

2. If I make a request for flexible working, how soon can I start?

There is no entitlement to change your working arrangements and making a change may mean having to vary your contract of employment.

Your manager will need time to consider the effects on the service and your work colleagues before deciding whether to agree to the change. Your manager might also want to consider requests from other team members before agreeing to any individual requests. Having a team based approach means that a manager can consider how all the changes can be managed to improve service delivery.

3. I work on a reception desk providing a front-line service to the public and one of my colleagues also provides a front-line service, I have to be at my desk at the times that we are open to the public and my colleague has to visit people at home. How can we work flexibly?

Not all of the different types of agile working arrangements are workable in all areas. Having more flexibility in the way that we do our jobs means that some people will be working differently to others. But this is not new; there have always been more restrictions in some service areas than in others.

If more agile working arrangements would help you to better manage your personal commitments ask your manager what scope there is for making changes. Although for example, home working might not be possible, there might be other changes that you could make. For example, working a compressed week could mean services being available for a longer period on the days that you work.

You might want to ask your manager to consider agile working and the issues on a team basis. You and your colleagues, and your manager, could then discuss your individual needs and how changes to your working arrangements could also have benefits for the service.

Considering Requests

4. I've received a request from one of my team to change their working arrangements. Do I have to agree to the request?

You do not have to agree to the request, but you should consider and discuss the potential benefits (and any disadvantages) that the change could have for the service. Consider the less tangible benefits – for example, a better focussed, motivated and committed member of your team. Will the change help the service to be more efficient?

5. Should the personal reasons for making a request be taken into account when deciding whether to agree to a change?

If someone asks to change their working arrangements they should explain how the change could benefit the service. It might be that the change would assist them to better manage commitments, responsibilities or interests that they have in their personal lives. These benefits for the employee might also mean benefits for the service in terms of increased morale, motivation, commitment, effectiveness, productivity and attendance. These might not be the only benefits, as the change might assist service delivery in other ways.

So the employee's reasons for making the request could help you assess how assisting the employee with their work-life balance will benefit the service, but it is for the employee to decide how much information they wish to provide.

6. I manage a team of ten staff. Half the team have submitted requests to change their working arrangements, but I'm concerned about how it would affect the workload of the other team members if I agree to the requests. What are my options?

If something is not workable because of the impact on other staff then you may decide not to agree to the changes. But you could consider whether changes could be made in a way that would benefit all staff and the service and discuss this as a team.

7. I've received a request for a flexible working arrangement. I'm minded to agree to the request, but I would like to be able to see how the change works in practice. Can I agree to the change on a temporary basis?

Yes, you could initially make the change on a temporary basis to assess the impact, but this should be agreed with the individual and the details confirmed in writing.

8. What if I've agreed a temporary arrangement and I want to terminate it early?

Before making the change, agree a notice period for ending the arrangement.

9. What if it doesn't work out or the arrangement needs to be terminated?

As part of the arrangement it is recommended that you formally review the process with your member of staff periodically and that you document this. The review process should be made clear in the response provided to the employee. This will allow an opportunity for both sides to discuss how it is working out.

If the arrangement ends and/or changes you need to notify HR Direct so that any appropriate letters can be sent and personnel file records adjusted.

Recording changes

10. What will be the impact of flexible working arrangements on an employee's terms and conditions of employment?

In general terms, all the main contractual entitlements - for example pay, annual leave and pension entitlements - will be unchanged in most cases, unless there is a reduction in hours or weeks worked. However, there will be changes that you may need to discuss and agree before starting a flexible working arrangement – working days, non-working days, hours to be worked on working days, how leave is to be calculated for non-standard working arrangements, the practical arrangements for home working, whether it is a temporary arrangement, whether there is to be trial period etc.

All issues of this type should be agreed in writing and a copy of the agreement kept on the employee's personal file. The Decision form can be used for this.

11. As a manager, are there any administrative procedures that I need to know about when considering requests for flexible working?

For contractual changes you will need to forward a completed change form to HR Direct so that the employee's personal records can be updated and 'variation of contract' letters sent. Copies of the forms/correspondence about the request should be sent with the changes form so these can be placed on the employee's personal file.

For non-contractual changes you will need to record the new flexible working arrangements on the employee's record using e-hr. You should also forward copies of the forms/correspondence about the request to HR Direct so these can be placed on the employee's personal file.

12. What is a contractual/non-contractual change?

As a rule, a contractual change is one that alters the number of hours or weeks an employee works and therefore has an impact on their pay and other contractual entitlements e.g. annual leave etc. Examples include a move to part time or term-time-only working.

Employees are contracted to work a certain number of hours/weeks, but the timing and location of work is agreed with their manager subject to the needs of the service. Examples of non-contractual changes therefore include compressed working weeks and regular remote working.

However, in services where there are shift working arrangements then changes to when hours are worked may there may be a change to shift pay entitlements, e.g. were the new working hours do not meet the criteria for enhanced rates. HR Direct can provide further advice on specific queries you may have.

Compressed Working Weeks

13. I've received a request from a member of my team to work a compressed working week, but I'm concerned about the cost of providing cover arrangements for the time that they are not working.

There is no entitlement for a member of staff to change their working arrangements. So if there are additional costs and they are not offset by additional benefits, you may decide not to agree to the request.

You might want to consider whether it is essential to provide cover or whether there is an alternative arrangement that would benefit the individual and the service.

14. I recently agreed a request for someone to work a compressed working week. I've now received a request from another member of my team to work a compressed working week. Am I being inconsistent, and unfair, if I turn down this request?

Each request should be considered on its merits and according to the circumstances at the time of the request. If you do this, you will not be acting inconsistently if you turn down a request after previously agreeing to a similar request, but you should have sound business reasons for turning down the request.

You might want to avoid this type of situation by considering agile working on a team basis – looking at how more agile working arrangements could help you to change and improve how your service is delivered.

15. A member of my team wants to work a compressed week, doing approximately 12 hours three days a week. Do I have to make additional payments for the hours that they work in the evening?

No. If someone asks to work a compressed working week, or make any other change to agile working, the change, if agreed, will be made to assist with their needs and the needs of the service. Any agreement with the employee should be made on the understanding that no additional payments will be made.

16. What if I ask them to work on their non-working day? Do I have to pay overtime?

This depends upon what the normal arrangements are in your work area when additional hours are worked. But generally it is not expected that any changes will result in additional costs. It may be that any additional hours could be compensated for by time off in lieu.

17. I'm concerned that the long working days that they would work with a compressed working week might increase stress.

Your team member has presumably requested to work a compressed working week because they feel that such a working arrangement will help with their work-life balance, and therefore reduce stress.

If there are genuine concerns that making the change would increase stress levels then the change shouldn't be agreed.

Part-time and term time working

18. A member of my team wants to reduce their hours, but to have the option of reverting back to full-time hours in three years time. I'm willing to agree to the reduction in hours but do I also have to agree to the return to full-time hours?

The V-time scheme provides for a temporary reduction in hours if an employee has a personal issue that they need to devote more time to for a period. There is only a right to return to full-time hours if the reduction is for a year or less.

If there are benefits for the service, you might want to agree to a permanent reduction in hours (and make the job part-time) but the employee would not have an automatic right to revert to full-time hours.

19. I am keen to agree to a request for term-time only working, but how do I cover the school holiday periods?

Before agreeing to the request you will want to consider the effects on the service if the employee is not working during the school holiday periods and whether it is necessary to cover the absences.

- Can the work be rearranged or reallocated to avoid having to make cover arrangements?
- Does the employee want to reduce their annual hours or is it possible for the work to be managed by the employee working additional hours during term-time?

If you need to recruit on a temporary basis during the holiday periods you might want to consider whether it would be possible to arrange a work placement from a local school or college.

20. I've received a request to work part-time. How should I objectively assess whether to agree to the request?

You will need to consider the effects on the service if you make the change. You could ask yourself the following questions:

- Does there need to be continuity of service?
- Can the job be done effectively at the times that the employee wants to work?
- Does the employee have supervisory responsibilities? Is there any way in which those responsibilities can be delegated or covered when the employee is not working?

Although you will want to be sympathetic to the employee's request you will need to consider whether it would be in the interests of the service to agree to the request.