

Implementing flexible working

1 . What flexible working is

Flexible working involves making a change to when, where or how an employee works.

Some form of flexibility can be built into almost all jobs, regardless of an organisation's size or sector.

Employees have a [statutory \(legal\) right to request flexible working](#). Employers must follow the statutory procedure for statutory requests. Employees and employers can also agree flexible working arrangements without the statutory procedure.

There are many different types of flexible working.

For example:

- part-time hours
- staggered hours
- remote working
- working from home
- hybrid working
- flexitime
- job sharing
- compressed hours

While some might not be practical for every job, it's likely other types will work.

[Find out about different types of flexible working](#)

Flexible working in your organisation

As an employer, you should consider what flexible working means in your organisation.

It can help to consider:

- which types of flexible working could be used in your organisation
- how you could implement each type, including any restrictions
- how you will manage requests
- how you promote flexible working

It's good practice to have a policy on flexible working. This can help managers and employees discuss and agree flexible working in a consistent way.

Find out more about:

- [having a flexible working policy](#)
- [changing your culture](#)

Benefits of flexible working

Flexible working can benefit both employees and employers.

For employees, it can help:

- balance work with other parts of their life
- them work at different times or locations
- improve health and wellbeing
- open up more jobs to them

For employers, it can help:

- attract and keep staff
- their employees be more productive
- keep employees happy and motivated
- recruit for jobs that are hard to fill
- improve diversity and inclusivity
- have staff available at different times
- reduce sickness and stress absences

These things can bring extra benefits. For example:

- having staff available at different times might allow you to extend your business hours or offer a service outside usual business hours
- extending working hours and having more engaged staff can help deliver a better service to your customers
- keeping employees motivated and reducing turnover can help retain experienced staff and reduce the costs of replacing, onboarding and training new staff
- reducing sickness, stress and absence can support your legal 'duty of care' for staff – [find out more about implied duties](#)

2. Types of flexible working

Employees and employers can agree any flexible working arrangement that meets both their needs.

When considering flexible working, it's best to start by thinking about what might be possible.

Flexible working can take many forms. Organisations can implement specific types of flexible working in different ways. Some examples are below.

Part-time hours

Part-time working means working reduced hours compared to full-time.

For example, working:

- 3 days a week, instead of 5
- 32 hours a week, instead of 40

- 9am to 1pm each day, instead of 9am to 5pm

Staggered hours

Staggered hours means having a different start and finish time to other employees.

For example, working from 7am to 4pm instead of 9am to 6pm.

Remote working and working from home

Remote working means working from somewhere other than the usual workplace.

For example:

- working from home
- working from a mixture of client offices, coffee shops and hotels
- choosing where to work within agreed limits

Employers and employees should agree:

- where's suitable to work remotely
- how to [keep in touch](#)
- how to [keep safe](#)

Hybrid working

Hybrid working is a mixture of working remotely and in the workplace.

For example:

- working 3 days from home and 2 days in the workplace
- working at least one day in the workplace, with the option to work remotely the rest of the week

Flexitime

Flexitime means having flexible start and finish times, within agreed limits.

For example, an employee works 8 hours a day. They choose when to start and finish as long as they work 10am to 4pm each day.

Job sharing

Job sharing is when 2 people do one job and split the hours. Depending on the job, employees might need to work together some of the time to hand over work.

For example:

- one employee works Monday to Wednesday and the other employee works Wednesday to Friday so they both work on Wednesdays
- one employee does the job every Monday and Tuesday, and another employee does it Wednesday to Friday

Compressed hours

Compressed hours means working the same total hours over fewer days.

For example, an employee works longer days to do their hours over:

- 4 days each week, instead of 5
- 9 days each fortnight, instead of 10
- 14 days each month

Annualised hours

Annualised hours means working an agreed number of hours over a year, with flexibility on when to work these hours.

For example, working a total of 1,500 hours over the year while doing:

- a minimum of 30 hours a week in October, November and December
- a minimum of 16 hours a week the rest of the year

Term-time working

Term-time working means working when schools are open.

For example, working Monday to Friday during school terms only.

Team-based rostering

Team-based rostering means taking team members' preferences into account when scheduling when they work. This is more common in retail and hospitality sectors.

For example, the team manager asks team members to submit their working pattern preferences. One team member says they cannot work on Fridays. The manager schedules other team members to work Fridays when planning the team rota.

Related content

[/statutory-flexible-working-requests](#)

3. Having a policy

As an employer, it's good practice to have a policy on flexible working.

A policy is a document that:

- outlines how things work in your organisation
- sets any limits

Your policy must follow the law as a minimum. You can offer more than the legal minimum in your policy. [Read more about the legal right to request flexible working.](#)

Reasons for having a policy

A policy can help:

- set expectations
- make your processes clear
- support managers to handle flexible working requests consistently, in line with the law

What to include

A flexible working policy should cover:

- what flexible working is
- types of flexible working
- the organisation's approach to flexible working
- who can make a flexible working request
- how to submit a request
- responding to a request
- appealing a decision
- next steps once a request is approved
- guidelines for flexible working arrangements – including how employees will be supervised, how performance will be measured, how the organisation and managers will communicate with employees
- how to raise and resolve issues with flexible working

You should work with any recognised trade unions your organisation has when developing and reviewing a policy. You should also check if your organisation has an agreement with the trade unions that requires you to do this.

[Use our example flexible working policy](#)

Reviewing your policies and processes

If you have a policy, you should review it regularly and keep it up-to-date.

Your flexible working policy might link to other policies and processes in your organisation.

For example, policies or processes relating to:

- working from home
- working remotely
- hybrid working
- hours of work
- reasonable adjustments
- maternity or family leave
- health and safety
- data protection
- risk assessments

You should review any linked policies to make sure they're up-to-date and consistent with each other.

Supporting and training managers

As an employer, you should support everyone to follow your flexible working policy.

You can support managers by:

- sharing your flexible working policy with the whole organisation
- making the procedure for handling requests clear in your policy
- training managers on how to handle flexible working requests if needed
- giving clear guidelines for flexible working arrangements – for example how managers will supervise and communicate with employees and measure performance

You can use your policy as the basis for any training for managers.

Acas offers training and webinars for managers and employers:

- [book flexible working training on our training website](#)
- [find free webinars](#) – including on flexible working

4. Changing your culture

It's important to create a culture of flexible working in your organisation to maximise the benefits it can bring.

Successfully embedding flexible working into your organisation's culture can help:

- reduce any stigma related to working flexibly
- encourage employees to request flexible working
- support managers to understand the processes and policies and support employees
- maximise the benefits of flexible working for your organisation
- prevent issues and handle any challenges
- achieve your business objectives
- support your organisational values

Making changes

Changing your culture might mean making changes in your organisation. Any changes should be communicated clearly to everyone. Depending on the change, you might need to consult with staff to agree changes, including trade union or employee representatives.

When making a change, it's important to get support from senior leaders and managers. If they understand the benefits and support a change, they can help implement it and lead by example.

To create a culture of flexible working, it can help to:

- design jobs with flexible working options in mind
- include any flexible working options in job adverts
- raise awareness – for example by sharing success stories or role modelling flexible working
- design performance measures based on output and achievements rather than hours worked
- have a flexible working policy – [read more about having a policy](#)
- share and promote your flexible working policy, if you have one
- train managers on how to handle flexible working requests
- set clear expectations and boundaries – for example, how to keep in touch, defining work hours

Flexible working arrangements might mean some employees work at different times or locations. This might mean reviewing how your organisation or teams work. For example, the way teams communicate and the channels they use.

Dealing with challenges

There can be challenges implementing flexible working. For example:

- you might not be able to accept every request
- flexible working arrangements could change the way staff communicate and work together
- you might have set-up costs for things like equipment, training or recruitment

You can prevent issues and deal with challenges by taking steps to create a culture of flexible working.

For example:

- having a clear policy can help you handle requests consistently, keep good working relationships and help agree alternative options when you cannot accept a request
- putting formal communication channels in place and setting clear expectations can help avoid communication issues when working flexibly
- embedding flexible working well can bring long-term savings that make up for set-up costs – including increased productivity, increased staff retention, reduced cost of office space, reduced sickness absence

Evaluating flexible working

As an employer, you should consider how you'll monitor and review flexible working in your organisation.

This can help you understand:

- how much flexible working is being used in your organisation, and if that changes
- if flexible working has improved or affected other things in your organisation
- if a specific change has been successful
- any issues and opportunities for improvements

It's a good idea to gather data before making a change, so you can compare data before and after a change.

Types of data to look at

It's good practice to record data about how your organisation uses flexible working. For example:

- number of requests
- how many requests are accepted, partially accepted and refused
- the reasons for any refusals

Other organisational data can also help review how a change has affected the organisation.

For example, data you routinely collect relating to:

- sickness absence
- staff turnover, including anecdotal evidence from exit interviews
- recruitment
- diversity of staff and job applicants
- gender pay gap
- organisational performance
- employee performance

- employee satisfaction, including staff surveys

Which data you review will depend on what you need to measure and evaluate.

For more advice about measuring and evaluating flexible working:

- [read CIPD's flexible working guidance](#)
- [use CIPD's checklist for measuring and evaluating flexible working](#)

Get more advice and support

As an employer, you can get more advice about implementing flexible working by reading:

- [CIPD's flexible working guidance](#)
- [flexible working case studies from Working Families](#)

You can also get advice on making a business case:

- [Working Families's advice on making a business case for flexible working](#)
- [CIPD's advice on flexible working business cases](#) including a checklist template

Employers who want to promote flexible working in job ads can use the [Happy to Talk Flexible Working logo from Working Families](#).

Acas training and support

Acas offers training for managers and employers:

- [flexible working training courses](#)
- [webinars](#)

Acas also offers [tailored support for employers](#) to address specific challenges in your organisation.