

Options for agreeing changes

If someone wants to change when, where or how they work, they can either:

- make a statutory flexible working request, if they are eligible
- discuss changes with their employer without using the statutory procedure
- request a reasonable adjustment, if the change relates to a disability

Making a statutory flexible working request

Anyone with the [legal status of employee](#) has the statutory right to request flexible working. This applies from the first day of the job.

Someone is not likely to be an employee if they're:

- an agency worker
- a casual worker
- on a zero-hours contract

If an employee makes a statutory flexible working request, the employer must:

- handle it in a reasonable way, in line with the [Acas Code of Practice on requests for flexible working](#)
- accept the request unless there's a genuine business reason not to
- consult the employee and discuss any alternative options – unless they've agreed to the request in full
- make a decision within a maximum of 2 months
- not dismiss or cause the employee detriment because of their request

Employers can accept, partially accept or reject a request. The employer can only reject the request if there's a genuine business reason.

Find out more about:

- [the statutory right to request flexible working](#)
- [making a statutory request](#)

Agreeing a change without using the statutory procedure

Anyone can ask for flexible working arrangements informally without using the statutory procedure.

For example, they might:

- prefer to informally ask for a change
- have already made 2 statutory requests that year
- need to ask for a short-term or urgent change
- not have the statutory right to request flexible working – for example, because they have the [legal status of worker](#)

Someone is likely to be a worker if they're:

- an agency worker
- a casual worker
- on a zero-hours contract

If you want to ask for a change, you might be able to agree it by talking to your manager. It can be quicker and easier to agree a change this way.

If you informally ask for flexible working, you and your employer do not need to follow the statutory procedure.

While there's no legal obligation to follow the Acas Code for informal requests, following a similar procedure can help:

- deal with requests fairly and reasonably
- avoid delays
- handle requests consistently
- keep good working relationships

If a change is agreed

If a flexible working change is agreed, this usually changes the terms of the employment contract.

For example, if the change relates to:

- working hours
- job location
- job description
- pay

If any contract terms change, the employer must put them in writing within one month of agreeing them.

Find out more about:

- [changing written terms](#)
- [changing an employment contract](#)

Asking for a change related to a disability

A disabled employee might need to ask for adjustments to where, when or how they work because of their disability.

In this situation they could make either:

- a reasonable adjustment request, under the Equality Act 2010
- a statutory flexible working request, under the Employment Rights Act 1996

They should carefully consider each option to decide what's best for their circumstances.

Making a reasonable adjustment request

Someone with the [legal status of worker](#) does not have the statutory right to make a flexible working request. However, they do have a right to request a reasonable adjustment.

A reasonable adjustment is a change that removes or reduces a disadvantage related to someone's disability. By law (Equality Act 2010), employers have a legal duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled workers.

Find out more about:

- [how to request a reasonable adjustment](#)
- [the law on reasonable adjustments](#)
- [what disability means](#)

Making a statutory flexible working request

The legal duty to make reasonable adjustments is separate to the legal duty to consider a flexible working request.

If an employee makes a flexible working request related to their disability, the employer must follow both:

- the statutory procedure for flexible working requests
- the law on reasonable adjustments when making a decision

The employer does not need to follow the law on reasonable adjustments if the flexible working request does not relate to the employee's disability. For example, if they request to reduce their hours to study part time.

This can be a complicated area and it's important for employers to understand their legal responsibilities. If an employer does not follow the law, an employee could make a claim to an employment tribunal.

Get more advice and support

To get more advice or support:

- [contact the Acas helpline](#) to talk through your options

- [find support for managing disability at work](#)

Before a job starts

The statutory right to request flexible working does not apply until the first day of a job.

However, employers should think about flexible working options for a job before someone starts. This can help prepare for any requests.

It's good practice for employers to:

- think about how the job might be done flexibly before advertising
- advertise any specific flexible working options that are available
- say in job adverts that they're open to discussing other flexible working options
- discuss flexible working before the applicant starts the job
- be open to what might be possible

This can help:

- start conversations about flexible working
- agree flexible working arrangements as early as possible
- start a good working relationship
- avoid the applicant turning down the job

As an employee, if you've been offered a job and would like to agree a flexible working arrangement, you can:

- discuss it with the employer – you can do this before or after you start
- make a statutory flexible working request once you start the job