**Flexible Working Policy**

The Company recognises that it is important for employees to achieve a balance between work and family commitments.

This policy explains who is eligible to make a request for flexible working and the procedure to be followed when making a request. This policy does not form part of your contract of employment.

The Company will endeavour to support flexible working wherever possible. However in considering such a request we reserve the right to reject a request where it is felt that flexible working would be detrimental to the efficient operation of the business.

The Company is committed to equal opportunity in employment. Any employee that undertakes flexible working, or makes a request to do so, will not be treated less favourably, or suffer any detriment. Requests from parents or carers will not be prioritised over requests from other employees.

Where a request for flexible working is granted this will result in a permanent change and a variation of the terms and conditions of the employee. There is no statutory right for a return to the terms and conditions that applied before the flexible working came into effect, should the employee’s circumstances change, although the Company will try to accommodate a return to full-time working wherever possible.

**Eligibility**

To be eligible to request flexible working you must:

* Be an employee;
* Not have made more than 2 applications to work flexibly during the previous 12 months.

**Making a Request for Flexible Working**

Employees have the statutory right to request flexible working from the first day of employment and are now entitled to make two requests within a 12-month period.

All requests for, including appeals, must be decided, and communicated to the employee within a period of two months from when the employer first receives the request. Mutual agreement to extend this period of time should be in writing.

All requests for flexible working must be made to the **POSITION** in the first instance.

An application under the statutory procedure must:

* Be in writing (paper, e-mail or fax) and dated;
* State the application is being made under the statutory right to request a flexible working pattern;
* Specify the flexible working pattern applied for;
* State the date on which it is proposed the change should become effective
* State whether a previous application has been made to the Company and, if so when it was made.

There should only be one ‘live’ request for flexible working at any one time. Once a request has been made, it remains live until any of the following occur:

* A decision about the request is made by the employer.
* The request is withdrawn.
* An outcome is mutually agreed.
* The statutory two-month period for deciding requests ends.

If the Company does consider the request withdrawn, they must inform the employee of this. This should be done in writing.

Any appeals that are sought should be processed in a reasonable manner and without unreasonable delay.

**Considering a Request for Flexible Working**

The Company has a legal duty to consider all requests for flexible working and establish whether the desired work pattern can be accommodated within the needs of the business. Each request will be considered objectively on this basis, and the Company shall not attempt to judge whether one applicant’s need for flexible working is greater than another’s.

Upon receipt of a request for flexible working the Company will, within 28 days, either:

* Agree to a request solely on the basis of the application itself and write to you specifying the contract variation agreed to and the start date;
* Invite you to a meeting to discuss your request;

**Meeting to Discuss Your Request**

Where it is not possible to grant your request solely on the basis of your application you will be invited to a meeting to discuss the request taking into consideration the potential benefits and impacts of either accepting or rejecting the request and any practical considerations involved in implementing the request. Consideration should also be given to modifications if the request cannot be accepted in full.

It may be appropriate to put a trial in place for the new working pattern.

The meeting will be held without unreasonable delay, allowing time for both parties to prepare for the discussion.

You may be accompanied by a work colleague, or a trade union representative should you wish.

Following the meeting we will consider the request seriously and impartially. The decision will be notified to you in writing.

If your request is granted, we will write to you notifying of:

* The new working pattern;
* The date from which the new working pattern is to take effect.

If your request is rejected, we will write to you setting out:

* The business ground/s for refusing the application;
* Sufficient explanation as to why the business ground/s for refusal applies in the circumstances;
* Details of any process to appeal the decision.

**Grounds for Refusal**

The Company may refuse a request for flexible working where the proposed changes would result in:

* Burden of additional costs;
* Detrimental effect on ability to meet customer demand;
* Inability to reorganise work among existing staff;
* Inability to recruit additional staff;
* Detrimental impact on quality;
* Detrimental impact on performance;
* Insufficiency of work during the periods the employee proposes to work;
* Planned structural changes.

**Making an Appeal against the Decision**

There is no statutory right to appeal a decision about a request for flexible working. Where a request for flexible working is refused the Company will consider a written appeal.

Upon receipt of your appeal the Company will arrange an appeal meeting without unreasonable delay. Whilst you do not hold the right to be accompanied, the Company shall consider any request for a companion to attend the meeting with you.

The Company will inform you of the outcome of the appeal in writing within the statutory decision period of two months., unless otherwise agreed in writing.