

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No. 9

meeting date: WEDNESDAY, 17 JANUARY 2018
title: FLEXIBLE WORKING OVERVIEW
submitted by: JANE PEARSON – DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES
principal author: MICHELLE SMITH – HEAD OF HR

1. PURPOSE

1.1 To inform members of the various policies that are in operation within the council that support flexible working.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:

- Community Objectives – The various flexible policies may make our working patterns more attractive to some elements of the local labour market and therefore could enhance employment opportunities for our residents.
- Corporate Priorities - A well-managed Council needs to have a flexible and well motivated workforce. The various flexible policies support our continuing efforts to advance staff moral and motivation, maintain a positive work life balance for our staff and enable them to carry out their work in the most effective/productive manner, whilst maintaining excellent service delivery and organisational outputs.
- Other Considerations - None.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 In November 2017 a team from the Local Government Association (LGA) visited the Council to carry out a Corporate Peer Challenge. They were on site over a 3-day period during which time they reviewed the Council's policies, strategies, and performance, and had discussions with a range of individuals and focus groups, eg representatives of staff, Councillors, the business community, the private sector, and voluntary sector.

2.2 The purpose of a Peer Challenge is to help Councils improve their performance and gives the Council the opportunity to demonstrate how well the Council has, and continues to, provide our residents with excellent services in challenging times.

3 ISSUES

3.1 At the end of the Peer Challenge the team delivered a feedback session to Committee Chairs, CMT and Heads of Service where they outlined their findings. These were then to be finalised in a formal written report that would be received early in the New Year.

3.2 One of the areas covered in the feedback session was 'Organisational Capacity' and the team reported that there was a perceived rigid approach to flexible working within the authority.

- 3.3 Following discussions with the Chairman it was felt that it would be helpful to remind Committee of the wide range of policies that exist within the Council to support flexible working. These are attached at Appendix A. These policies have been in place for a number of years and are reviewed regularly.
- 3.4 All the policies have been developed in consultation with the Union and approved by CMT and Personnel Committee where appropriate.
- 3.5 The policies are appropriate for our circumstances and give staff much flexibility within clearly defined parameters that ensure service delivery is not adversely affected by their implementation.

4 RISK ASSESSMENT

- 4.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications:
- Resources - Flexible working needs to be properly authorised and monitored in order to ensure that departments have sufficient staff to maintain services.
 - Technical, Environmental and Legal - There are no environmental or technical implications. There is legal Right to Request Flexible Working for employees who have 26 weeks service with an employer.
 - Political - No political implications identified.
 - Reputation - The reputation of the authority as a good employer is enhanced by flexible working arrangements.
 - Equality and Diversity - No equality and diversity implications identified.

5 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 That Members note the report.

MICHELLE SMITH
HEAD OF HR

JANE PEARSON
DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

For further information please ask for Michelle Smith, extension 4402.



Ribble Valley
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FLEXIBLE WORKING HOURS SCHEME

FLEXIBLE WORKING HOURS SCHEME

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Ribble Valley Borough Council is committed, wherever possible, to providing employees with a degree of flexibility in their working hours to enable them to balance their working life with their domestic circumstances. The Flexible Working Hours Scheme aims to provide this flexibility by allowing a limited amount of choice in the start and finish times of employees at work whilst at the same time offering the Council the flexibility to manage fluctuations in workloads.
- 1.2 The Flexible Working Hours Scheme applies to full time employees and part time employees of the Council, including employees in their probationary period. The Scheme does not apply to certain categories of staff and in sections where flexible working is not feasible.
- 1.3 The needs of the Council, in providing services to the public, will always take priority over the Flexible Working Hours Scheme. In any situation where it is found that the needs of the Council conflicts with the operation of the Scheme, in any Service, the Council reserves the right to suspend the Scheme for those affected employees.
- 1.4 It is vital that services to the public should not be affected by the Scheme and, therefore, the official opening hours to the public must be maintained. Restrictions to the Scheme may be necessary to maintain cover to deal with enquiries from the public. Heads of Service are responsible for ensuring that office/reception cover during official office opening hours is maintained.
- 1.5. Some Services operate a different flexible working hours scheme to the one described in this document to take into account different operational needs, however, the principles of the Council's main Scheme, as set out below, will still apply. These different schemes are in the Time Off in Lieu Policy.
- 1.6 This scheme, which applies to all staff who work in the Council Offices, Church Walk, Clitheroe, was introduced on 3 April 2000.
- 1.7 The successful operation of the scheme depends upon the cooperation of all staff.
- 1.8 Staff excluded from the scheme will be kept to an absolute minimum.
- 1.9 The scheme provides the opportunity for staff to request the hours of work that consistently suit their individual needs. However, it may not be possible to meet all requests, therefore individual working arrangements **must be agreed with the appropriate Head of Service and Personnel.**

2 DEFINITIONS

- 2.1 Office Hours - these are Monday to Friday 0845 hours to 17.00 hours.
- 2.2 Standard Working Day - is either 7 hours 15 minutes (36¼ hour week) or 7 hours 24 minutes (37 hour week).
- 2.3 Standard Half Working Day - is either 3 hours 38 minutes (36¼ hour week) or 3 hours 42 minutes (37 hour week).

- 2.4 Weekly Contracted Hours - means the five working days Monday to Friday inclusive totalling either 36¼ hours or 37 hours.
- 2.5 Core Time - is the period between 1000 – 1200 hours and 1400 - 1600 hours. All staff must be at work between these hours. If you clock in after 10am when arriving for work in the morning or after 2pm when returning from lunch, or, leave the office for lunch before 12 noon or before 4pm to go home, an infringement will be shown on the system. If such poor timekeeping persists you will be taken off the flexi scheme and will work fixed hours.
- 2.6 Total Bandwidth - this is the time between the earliest permitted start of work and the latest permitted finish of work. The earliest permitted start time is 0800 hours and the latest permitted finish time is 1800 hours. All time worked within this bandwidth will be recorded and credited. Time worked outside this bandwidth will not be credited and will only be allowed as overtime when prior authorisation has been given. Exceptions are evening meetings and emergency call-outs which will continue to be dealt with separately under existing arrangements.
- 2.7 Lunch Break - may be taken at any time between 1200 hours and 1400 hours always provided that there is adequate staff cover. The minimum lunch break is 30 minutes and the maximum lunch break is 2 hours. However staff wishing to take more than 1½ hours lunch break must obtain the prior agreement of their Head of Service. Failure to clock out/in for lunch will result in a 2 hour deduction, until an appropriate adjustment card is submitted. If work commitments, eg a meeting which runs over into lunchtime, mean that you cannot take lunch until after 2pm, you should still clock 'out' and 'in' then complete an adjustment card for your flexi administrator.
- In exceptional circumstances where you have had to work through lunch or not had lunch until late eg if you have been in a meeting, you should still clock in and out for a lunch break but then complete an adjustment card to indicate the reason for the late lunch. This will then be recorded as 'late lunch' on the system.
- 2.8 Flexible Hours - are the periods between 0800 hours and 1000 hours; and 1600 hours and 1800 hours. During these periods staff may attend work when they wish with the agreement of their Head of Service. Staff attendance is also subject to the requirements of this scheme being met and the need to provide a comprehensive service.
- 2.9 The Settlement Period - is four weeks long. Details of settlement periods can be found next to the clock machine. Note that the periods change annually.
- 2.10 Carry Forward - is the credit or debit time at the end of each day which will be carried forward to the next day. A maximum of two fifths of weekly contractual hours can be carried forward as credit to the next settlement period and subsequently to further settlement periods eg 14 hours 30 minutes (36¼ hour week), 14 hours 48 minutes (37 hour week) or 7 hours 24 minutes (18½ hour week). If the credit time exceeds these maximums at the end of any settlement period, the excess time will be lost. A maximum of one fifth of weekly contractual hours can be carried forward as a debit to the next settlement period. In the case of debit time **all time should be made up in the following settlement period**. If you continue to be in debit for three consecutive settlement periods you will be taken off the flexi scheme and will work fixed hours. In such circumstances, staff will still be required to clock in and out but will not be able to accrue flexi credit and must make up any outstanding debt whilst working the fixed hours. Reinstatement onto the scheme will then be at the discretion of your Head of Service. Staff who continue to be in debit frequently despite these sanctions, may be subject to disciplinary action.

- 2.11 Flexi Leave - may be taken only with the approval of the appropriate Head of Service. One full day or two half days during each settlement period may be taken as flexi leave. Staff may take flexi leave in the period that it is accrued, provided he/she has sufficient time in credit to take a full/half day. When applying to take flexi leave with his/her Head of Service, the Head of Service must check that an individual has time in credit before approving flexi leave. Staff cannot anticipate accrual of hours, eg staff cannot take a half/full day this week and then work up the hours to cover next week. If you take a half-day flexi leave in the morning, you cannot come into work in the afternoon before 1230 hours and you must be clocked in by 1400 hours at the latest. If you take a half-day flexi leave in the afternoon, the earliest time that you can leave is 1200 hours and the latest time that you can leave is 1330 hours. The same provisions apply to taking a half-day annual leave.

In situations where excess flexi has been accrued because of particular peaks in workload and therefore it has not been possible to take flexi leave due to work demands, then in such exceptional circumstances and with the approval of your Director, any excess hours accrued above a standard working day at the end of a flexi period, may be transferred to lieu time.

- 2.12 Leave Conversion – Staff may convert one day of annual leave into lieu time per year. Lieu leave can then be taken in accordance with the rules as detailed in the Time off in Lieu Policy. This arrangement will be reviewed annually.
- 2.13 Request slips for flexi leave must be submitted and approved by a Head of Service prior to taking the leave.
- 2.14 All staff should clock in/out when they arrive late/leave early as a result of taking flexi leave. This also applies to staff taking a half day annual leave.
- 2.15 Overtime - will not normally be permitted within the bandwidth except in circumstances agreed by the appropriate director. In these exceptional circumstances the member of staff must clock off as normal at the end of their normal working day, then clock back in before commencing overtime work. When overtime is completed the individual should clock off again. Overtime will be paid except for staff whose salary is in excess of Scale 6.
- 2.16 Absence for sickness leave - will be credited on the basis of a full working day or half working day. Where a member of staff because of certified sickness is either in credit or debit of by one of their contracted working days at the end of a settlement period and due to sickness has not been able to reduce this credit or debit the excess hours will be carried forward (as per the details outlined at 2.10) However the credit or debit time must not exceed their standard contracted working day at the end of the next settlement period following return to work.
- 2.17 Staff arriving late or leaving early because of personal sickness - will be credited with a standard full or half day. Staff must clock in/out. Staff must also complete a manual adjustment card and a green sickness declaration form for this absence, both of which should be given to their flexi administrator.
- 2.18 Visits - All staff to clock in when arriving at work having been on a visit on their way to/from the offices at the beginning/end of the working day.
- 2.19 Working from Home – to request to work from home an employee must complete a request slip which must then be approved in advance by an employee's Head of Service (request slips are available from the flexi administrators). Approval will only be granted where clear outputs have been agreed eg completion of a specific piece of work or production of Committee reports.

2.20 Attendance at meetings Where a member of staff is attending a meeting away from the office, he/she will be credited with the actual time of the meeting including travelling time to and from the meeting (this means time taken to get to the meeting less normal time taken to get work if first thing in the morning), either back to the office or home, whichever is the shorter. If a meeting finishes outside core time ie after 4pm and you choose not to return to work you will be credited with the time up to the end of the meeting. Please remember that if you are attending a meeting with a colleague who is a lease car holder, you should travel together wherever possible.

2.21 Absence for Training/Seminar/Workshop/Conference

Staff will be credited with a standard working day or half day as appropriate. This credit will be confirmed to the relevant administrator when staff are issued with confirmation of approval to attend such alternatives, from the Personnel Section ie once a training request form has been completed (available from Personnel).

2.22 Authorised Absence - such as a dentist, doctor, optician or hospital appointment will be allowed but should, wherever possible, be outside of core time, and in the case of part-time staff, in their own time where possible. **These authorised absences must always be prior agreed with the appropriate Head of Service unless there are exceptional circumstances.**

Staff attending an appointment before they come to work must clock in on arrival and then they will be credited with an average of their last five clock times (excluding when on holiday/flexi leave etc). Similarly, staff attending a late afternoon appointment must clock out on leaving and then they will be credited with an average of their last five clock times (excluding holiday/flexi leave etc).

Staff are required to clock out and in when attending an appointment during core time and should complete a flexi adjustment card which will enable them to be awarded the standard half/full day dependent on time of appointment.

For hospital appointments staff will be credited with a standard half or full working day.

If an employee is accessing physiotherapy (NHS or private), work-related counselling (NHS or private) or other services provided by the NHS, they will be allowed to attend appointments in work time as per the arrangements for medical appointments outlined above. Where an employee accesses private counselling services for non-work related matters, they will be allowed to attend the appointment in work time but will have to make the time up at a later date or use annual/flexi/lieu leave to cover their absence.

3 CONTROL OF THE SCHEME

3.1 The Head of Service of each section will be responsible for the operation of the flexible working hours scheme within their section. The Heads of Service will be responsible for ensuring adequate staff cover, particularly for public reception areas and for the allocation of work to staff starting or finishing work outside the hours of the working day.

3.2 Staff may be required to undertake cover duties for their colleagues on a rota basis to ensure that services are maintained. The management retains the right to require a member of staff to attend at specified times within the bandwidth in order to maintain satisfactory service levels. During the afternoon flexible hours the Head of Service may require a member of staff to leave work at 1700 hours if no work is available.

3.3 Staff attendance times must follow an agreed regular pattern.

- 3.4 All adjustments will be made by the system administrators (PA's).
- 3.5 The system administrators will have nominated staff to cover for them in times of absence in order to ensure that balances/adjustments are as up to date as possible.

4 OPERATION OF THE SCHEME

- 4.1 Recording hours worked out of the office - if a member of staff leaves the offices on authorised business and expects to return either before lunch or before the end of the bandwidth (depending on whether the member of staff was out during the morning or afternoon) he/she should not clock out.
- 4.2 The outer limits of an adjustment allowance period whilst a member of staff is at work are Monday to Friday 0845 - 1700 hours. Any exception must be agreed with the appropriate manager.

5 CALCULATION OF THE TIME WORKED

- 5.1 This is done automatically by the system but each staff member must ensure that all starting and finishing times not registered by a card swipe are entered on a flexitime adjustment card which is passed to their Head of Service for authorisation. This also applies in case of sickness.

6. OFFICE COVER

- 6.1 In all cases, the application of the Flexible Working Hours Scheme is subject to the business needs of the Council and it's customers.

7 TIME RECORDING EQUIPMENT

- 7.1 The time recording equipment clock is situated in the corridor opposite the internal audit office on level B. Staff are responsible for their own swipe fob and a charge will be made for the replacement of any which are lost.

8 EXCLUSIONS

- 8.1 Any staff that are to be excluded from this scheme must be defined by the appropriate director after consultation with the Chief Executive. Exclusions will be kept to the absolute minimum and will only be allowed in exceptional circumstances.

9 MISUSE OF THE SCHEME

- 9.1 Any misuse of the scheme by any member of staff may lead to them either being given fixed working hours for a specified period or being dealt with under the Council's disciplinary procedure.

Signatures:

..... Chief Executive

..... Head of HR

..... UNISON Branch Secretary



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JOB SHARE POLICY

1. DEFINITION

Job Share involves the sharing of a post by two employees. The two employees share the responsibilities/duties of a post, the salary and any other benefits on a pro-rata basis to the hours worked.

Should one of the employees resign from their job share post, their job share partner may apply for the post on a full-time basis.

This does not apply if the employee has already been granted flexible retirement by the Council.

Whilst job share is a way of improving an employee's work life balance, a job share arrangement cannot be detrimental to organisational effectiveness. When a request is considered, the interests of the authority will take precedence over the interests of the individual.

2. WHO CAN APPLY?

All full time employees with at least 12 months continuous service are eligible to make a request to job share.

3. WORKING PRACTICES AND OPTIONS

There are various ways in which a working week can be divided for job sharers. The following are the most common examples:

- Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday am / Wednesday pm, Thursday and Friday.
- Mornings/afternoons.

Normally, hours of work are divided equally between the job sharers, however, in certain circumstances with agreement from a Director, employees may work more or less hours provided the total hours worked make up the total allocated to the post and it would not cause recruitment difficulties (eg one employee working 3 days and other working 2 days per week).

This allows employees to work reduced hours without the need for job re-design and reallocation of tasks.

It is the responsibility of the job share partners to make adequate preparations, before agreeing to job share, to ensure its success and ensure continuity of service.

4. MAKING A REQUEST

When making a request to job share an employee must identify:

- their preferred pattern of working;
- how they anticipate the duties of the post to be shared;
- how they intend to communicate with job share partner.

The request must be made in writing to the Head of Service, who will arrange a meeting within 28 days to discuss the request. The Head of Service may be accompanied by a member of Personnel and the employee may be accompanied by a fellow employee or a trade union representative.

If the request is supported in principle by the Head of Service, it will be submitted to Corporate Management Team for approval.

If the request is approved, CMT will decide the terms of the job share and will inform Personnel who will notify the employee of the arrangement in writing. If CMT decide on a different arrangement than has been requested, that decision will be referred back to the Head of Service for further discussion with the employee.

In considering the submission, CMT may give approval to operate the arrangement for a trial period. If so, when confirming the arrangement, a specific review date will be set. This trial period must be less than 12 months. Following the review date, if it is felt the arrangement is not working, the employee will be asked to resume full time hours.

Approval may also be given on condition that a suitable job share partner can be appointed.

If a suitable job share partner cannot be appointed, approval of the request may be withdrawn.

If the request is not supported in principle by the Head of Service, the employee may choose to appeal against the Head of Service's decision. If that is the case, the appeal must be made in writing to the employee's Director within 14 days of the rejection.

Within 14 days of receiving the written appeal, the Director will arrange a meeting with the employee to discuss the appeal. Again, the Director may be accompanied by a member of Personnel and the employee may be accompanied by a fellow employee or a trade union representative.

Within 14 days of the meeting, the Director will write to the employee notifying them of the final decision that he/she either supports the appeal, in which case the appeal will be submitted to CMT in accordance with the procedure outlined above; or if the appeal is rejected, the Director will provide specific reasons. This decision is final and there is no opportunity for appeal.

5. IMPLICATIONS ON CONDITIONS OF SERVICE

In general, conditions applicable to full-time employees will apply to those who work job share. The following areas should be considered:

Job Description

The job description will reflect all of the duties of the post.

Rate of Pay

Pay shall be pro-rata to the full-time rate for each employee dependent upon the number of hours worked. Commencing salary and increments will be determined in accordance with appropriate National and Local Conditions of Service and normal incremental progression shall apply.

Annual Leave

Standard leave entitlement will apply under appropriate National and Local Conditions of Service. Leave entitlement will be pro-rata to the number of hours worked.

Public Holidays

Each employee will be entitled to a proportion of all the public holidays depending upon their working pattern. For example:

One employee works Mondays, Tuesday and Wednesday am and the other Wednesday pm, Thursday and Friday. Should the Bank Holiday fall on a Monday, one employee would work Tuesday and Wednesday and the other would work Thursday and Friday, thus sharing the Bank Holiday and the remaining working hours in that week.

If one partner is unable to work the full Wednesday, arrangements must be made to make up the time in the week the Bank Holiday occurs.

Sick Pay

Employees working reduced hours will have the provisions of the appropriate National and Local Conditions of Service Sickness Payments Scheme applied pro-rata to the number of hours worked.

Maternity Leave/Maternity Support Leave

There is entitlement to the appropriate National and Local Conditions of Service Maternity Leave Scheme, payment to be applied on a pro-rata basis for reduced hours.

Car Loans

Employees working reduced hours who are designated car users will be eligible for a car loan in accordance with Local Conditions of Service.

Superannuation

The effect of working reduced hours on pension benefits depends on a number of factors eg the extent of the reduction, whether an employee is nearing retirement etc. Contribution to the pension scheme would be reduced, as this is a percentage-based payment. Advice should be sought from the 'Your Pension Service' website.

Additional Hours

Any additional hours should be offered to both employees equally, and will be paid at plain time in accordance with National and Local Conditions of Service for any additional hours worked up to 37 hours, or taken as time off in lieu.

Training

Employees working job share should have access to training opportunities on the same basis as full-time employees. Where training takes place on a non-working day, arrangements should be made to alter the working pattern for that week.

Health & Safety

Job sharers who undertake the duties of a designated first aider will get paid the allowance pro-rata to their hours worked.

Applications will be considered in line with service requirements and final decisions will be made at the discretion of the Corporate Management Team in consultation with the Head of HR.

Signatures:

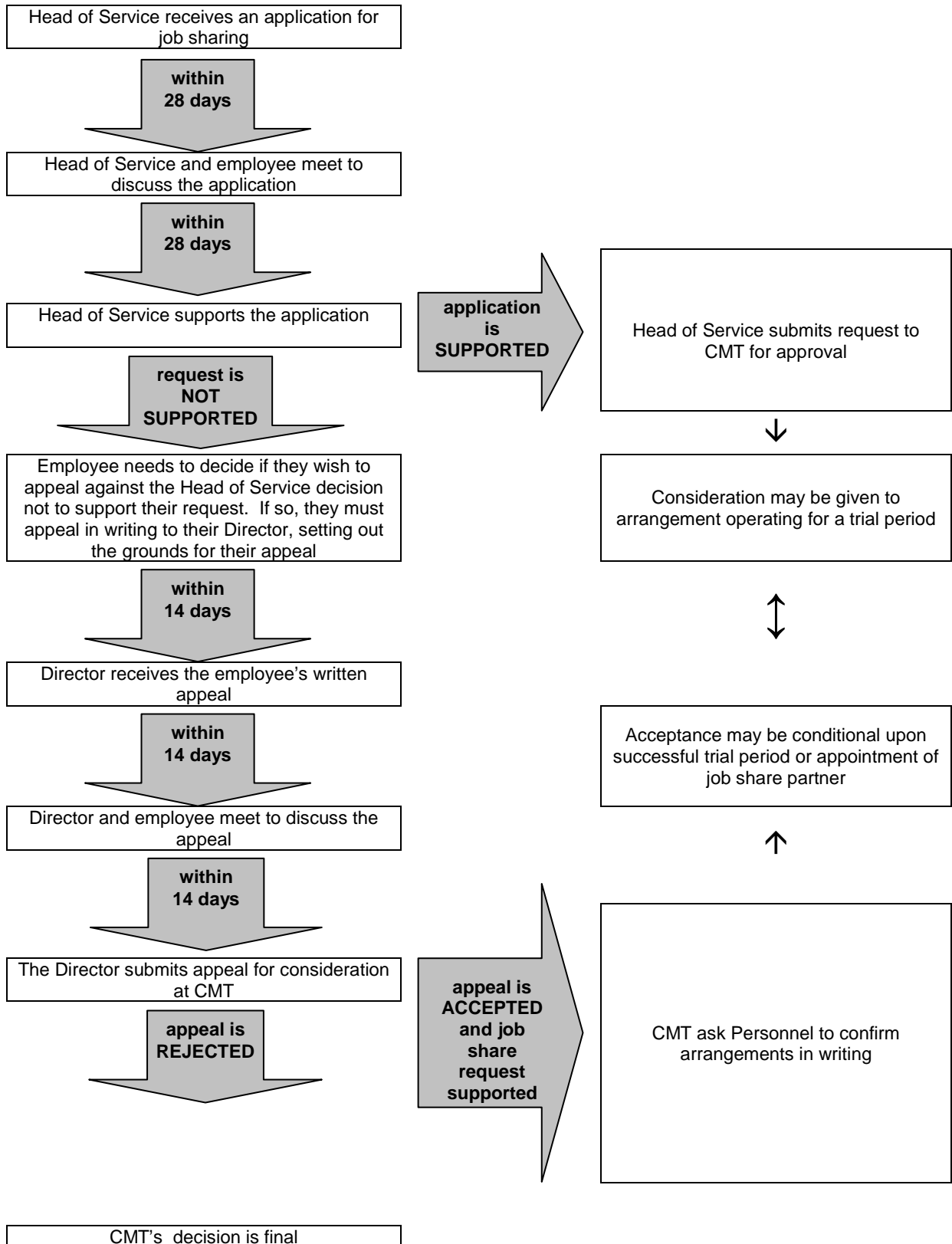
..... Chief Executive

..... Head of HR

..... UNISON Branch Secretary

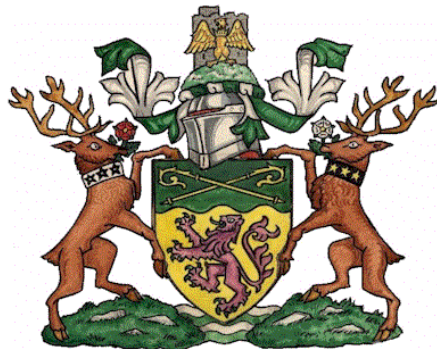
JOB SHARE POLICY

HOW DOES THE PROCESS WORK?



RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

RIGHT TO REQUEST FLEXIBLE WORKING



RIGHT TO REQUEST FLEXIBLE WORKING

1. INTRODUCTION

The Council wishes to facilitate and support its employees in achieving a balance between their work and family life. As part of this, the Council recognises its duty to seriously consider requests for flexible working arrangements from employees with young children or with caring responsibilities for certain categories of adults.

2. CONDITIONS OF THE SCHEME

In order to exercise their right to request flexible working, the employee must have been continuously employed by the Council for at least 26 weeks on the date they submit their application for consideration.

In addition, the employee must:

- (a) have the responsibility, or expect to have responsibility, for the bringing up of a child aged under 17 years; or
- (b) have the responsibility, or expect to have responsibility, for the bringing up of a disabled child aged under 18 years; or
- (c) have the responsibility, or expect to have responsibility for caring for a person who is aged 18 years or over.

To qualify under (a) or (b) above, employees must be the mother, father, adopter, guardian, special guardian or foster parent of the child, or married to such a person, or the partner of such a person. The application can be made up to the child's 17th birthday or 18th birthday in the case of a disabled child.

To qualify under (c) above, the person in need of care must be aged 18 years or over and must be:

- married to, or the civil partner of, the employee; or
- a relative of the employee; or
- living at the same address as the employee.

Partner covers men and women who are not married but are living together as husband and wife, and two people of the same sex who are not civil partners but are living together as if they are civil partners.

Relative is defined as mother, father, adopter, guardian, special guardian, parent-in-law, step-parent, son, step-son, son-in-law, daughter, step-daughter, daughter-in-law, brother, step-brother, brother-in-law, sister, step-sister, sister-in-law, uncle, aunt or grandparent and includes adoptive relationships and relationships of the full blood or half blood – eg half-brother or half-sister will also be covered. In the case of an adopted person, the above relationships that would have existed but for the adoption are also covered, eg the adopted person's natural relatives.

An employee may only make one application to work flexibly under this procedure in any 12 month period.

The application must be made to enable the employee to care for the person detailed in the application.

If a request is agreed, it will be a permanent variation to contract and there will be no right for the employee to revert back to the former arrangement.

3. EMPLOYEE'S OBLIGATIONS UNDER THE SCHEME

Employees may request a new working pattern at any time subject to the above conditions.

They must submit their request for a flexible working arrangement in writing to their Head of Service. It must be signed and dated, and include the following information:

- Their relationship to the person for whom they have parental or caring responsibility;
- Whether (and, if so, when) they have made any previous application(s) for flexible working;
- A description of the working pattern they require and their views on how it might impact on the Service and how the flexible working arrangements could be made to work;
- The date on which they propose the new working arrangements should become effective.

4. EMPLOYER'S OBLIGATIONS UNDER THE SCHEME

The Head of Service must seriously consider the business case for accepting or rejecting an employee's request for flexible working.

The Head of Service must convene a meeting to consider the employee's request within 28 days of receiving it. This requirement does not apply if the Head of Service agrees to the request and notifies the employee accordingly in writing within 28 days of receiving it.

Employees may attend the meeting with a trade union representative or workplace colleague if they wish. A member of Personnel will advise the Head of Service.

If the Head of Service accepts the request:

They should write to the employee within 14 days of date of the meeting, setting out any action on which the agreement is dependent and establish a start date.

If the Head of Service rejects the request:

They should provide a full explanation of the business reasons for rejecting the request, in writing, within 14 days of the date of the meeting and inform the employee of the appeals procedure.

Reasons for refusing a request must be based on one or more of the following business reasons:

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

Each request will be dealt with individually, taking into account the nature of the employee's request and any likely effects of granting it.

Agreeing to one employee's request will not set a precedent or create a right for other employees to have their request for flexible working granted.

5. RIGHT OF APPEAL AGAINST A REFUSAL TO GRANT A REQUEST FOR FLEXIBLE WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

Employees wishing to appeal against a Head of Service's decision to reject their request for flexible working arrangements should do so by writing to their Director, stating their grounds for appeal, within 14 days of receiving written notification of the rejection of their request.

The Director will hold an appeal meeting within 14 days of receiving the employee's notice of appeal. If the Director is on holiday or sick leave on the day when the notice of appeal is submitted, the 14 day period should commence on the day that the Director returns to work. The employee will be invited to attend the appeal meeting and can be accompanied at this meeting by a Union Representative or a fellow employee.

The Director will respond to the employee within 14 days of the appeal hearing.

If the Director upholds the Head of Service's Decision:

They will write to the employee setting out the grounds for the refusal, explaining why they apply.

If the Director accepts the request for flexible working:

They should write to the employee within 14 days of date of the meeting, setting out any action on which the agreement is dependent and establish a start date for the new working arrangement.

Signatures:

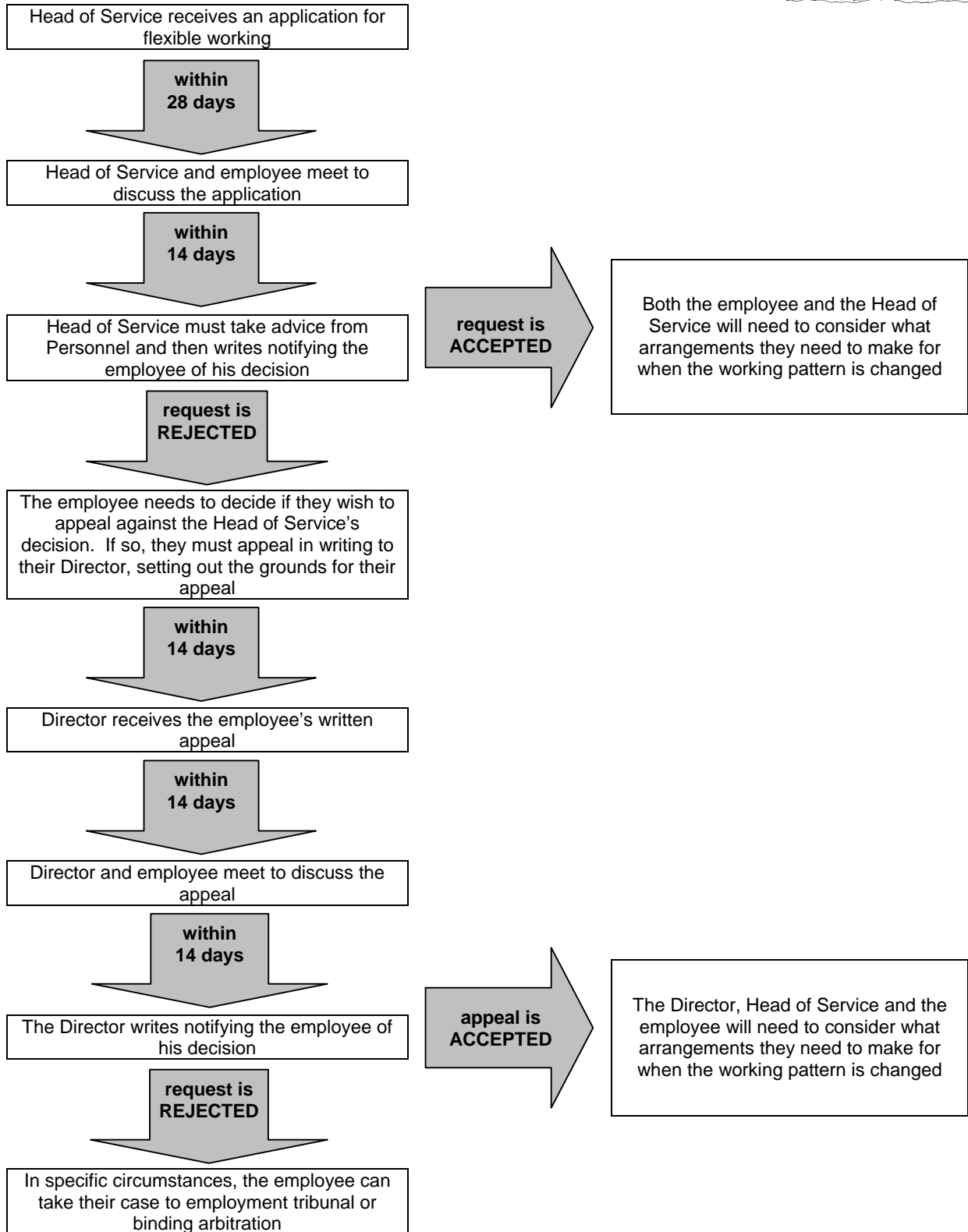
..... Chief Executive

..... Head of HR

..... Unison Branch Secretary

FLEXIBLE WORKING

HOW DOES THE PROCESS WORK?



REQUEST FOR A CONTRACTUAL CHANGE



Ribble Valley
Borough Council
www.ribblevalley.gov.uk

Name: _____ Department: _____

Job Title: _____

On occasion circumstances may arise whereby an employee wishes to changes his/her contractual terms and conditions of employment eg to reduce from full time working to part time working. If this is the case, an employee must complete this form in order to have his/her request formally considered.

Any proposed change must meet the needs of the Service and is at the Council's discretion. There is no obligation on the Council to approve any request. Please be aware that a contractual change could result in a reduction in earnings that would be reflected in an employee's pension contributions. It may also affect other entitlements eg annual leave entitlement, redundancy payments. Once approved, any change will be permanent.

Employee:

1.	How do you wish to change your current contractual terms and conditions?
2.	What are the implications of this change on your job and/or the service you deliver?
3.	What would be the benefits of the change to the Council?

4.	On what date would you wish the change to your contract to commence?
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Head of Service

1.	Has the employee discussed their request with you?
2.	What are the implications of his/her request for your department/service?
3.	How would workloads/tasks be covered if the request was approved?
4.	How would the change benefit the Council?
5.	What is your recommendation?

This form must be presented to CMT together with a covering letter from the individual who is requesting a change to their contractual terms.

All requests must be submitted to a Head of Service for initial approval. If the Head of Service supports the request it will be submitted to a relevant Director who will then decide if the request should be submitted to Corporate Management Team for full approval.

Signed: _____
 Head of Service _____
 Print Name: _____
 Date: _____

Signed: _____
 Employee _____
 Print Name: _____
 Date: _____

HOMWORKING SCHEME



WHAT IS HOMEWORKING?

Homeworking is a scheme whereby employees work at home for either part or all of their working hours. It involves work carried out at home which traditionally has been done in the office or other workplace. The work may take place with/without the aid of a personal computer. Working **from** home is a slightly different arrangement where an employee who is mobile for significant periods uses their home as a base to make journeys in the course of their work, for example Building Inspectors.

WHY HOMEWORKING?

Employees who have tried homeworking previously found that it has a number of benefits:

- Increases productivity and quality of work.
- Ability to complete tasks uninterrupted and therefore able to concentrate.
- Enables them to balance work and home life.
- Enables them to plan effectively and produce work when they feel most productive.
- Gives greater job satisfaction.

From the employer perspective these in turn can benefit the organisation by:

- Improved staff morale.
- Increased productivity and quality of service.
- Retention of skilled staff.
- Environmental benefits for example by reducing commuting.
- Make a contribution to resolving issues such as car parking and accommodation problems.
- Extend flexible practices to enable women returners, carers and people with disabilities to join the workforce.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

Homeworking can be suitable for a wide range of jobs particularly through the use of information Technology, although a computer is not essential for homeworking in many cases. In practice though, homeworking may not be suitable for all jobs, for example those which require high levels of interpersonal contact with members of the public at a particular base, or where access to files, equipment, etc make it impracticable.

In all circumstances requests to work at home must be discussed fully and agreed with the relevant Service Manager. Where agreement cannot be reached, the matter should be referred to Personnel for consideration.

HOMEWORKING ARRANGEMENTS

Homeworking can take place in a variety of ways as follows:

- (i) an ad hoc basis
 - where employees work at home to complete a piece of work, report or project as and when required.
- (ii) temporary basis
 - to provide a temporary solution to a problem eg, a member of staff has a mobility problem for a period of time, or where a concentrated piece of complex work is required within certain timescales.
- (iii) permanent basis
 - where an employee works at home some or all of his/her hours as their standard working arrangement.

The first example is likely to be an irregular part-time arrangement, whereas (ii) and (iii) could be on either a part-time basis or a full-time arrangements.

If homeworking is on a temporary regular basis eg, two days per week, then a variation of the contract is required, which informs the employee in writing of the new arrangements. In circumstances where a permanent arrangement is agreed then a new Statement of Particulars will be required, which clearly sets out the conditions of the homeworking arrangement.

It is important that in agreeing arrangements for homeworking the guidelines for Managers and Employees are followed.

GUIDELINES FOR MANAGERS AND EMPLOYEES

Managers may only be used to conventional working where access to staff is regular and immediate. Homeworking requires a different approach and mutual trust and empowerment will play an important role. Equally important will be the need to concentrate on outputs rather than the number of hours worked. The key to this approach will be:

- Setting and agreeing clear objectives and targets.
- Proper planning of work and projects.
- Regular monitoring.
- Feedback.

NB: Any homeworking arrangement must be closely monitored and focussed on tangible outputs.

COMMUNICATION

One of the most crucial factors in setting up homeworking arrangements is effective communication. Contact arrangements must be made clear between the Manager and the homeworker and to other members of staff. These arrangements may vary from one homeworker to another for example:

- Contactable as normal.
- Ring in at regular intervals for messages.
- Staff to contact homeworker at specified times to relay messages.
- Emergency contact only.

In certain circumstances, ie, where homeworking is instigated to enable uninterrupted periods to work on complex issues, contact may be minimal.

Whatever the contact arrangements are, they must be communicated to other staff. Dealing with external customers must also be agreed in advance. Home telephone numbers should not be released except by prior agreement and such access should be strictly limited.

In cases where homeworking is on an ad hoc basis the contact process is even more important and homeworking sessions should be planned in advance to avoid a situation where support staff or colleagues find themselves covering unexpectedly.

IMPACT ON THE SERVICE/SECTION

Lack of communication is just one area which can affect the success of homeworking. The impact on other staff and the work of the service/section must be taken into consideration when organising the homeworking scheme. The Manager may have to consider changing working practices, identify suitable tasks for homeworking, determine what access to equipment and files is required and the links to other areas of work, and the supervising process.

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

- There should be no adverse effects on the level and quality of service.
- Appropriate supervision arrangements must be in place.
- There should be no increase in workload for colleagues as a result of an employee working at or from home, except in exceptional circumstances. An example of this could be where a temporary arrangement is agreed to respond to an urgent need, and other team members may be required to cover incoming calls for a specified period.
- It must be safe for the work to be carried out at home.
- Confidential information needs to be protected.
- Reporting procedures for absence and sickness should be followed for employees working at home.
- Keep the homeworker informed of issues happening in the office.

Homeworking is a very different way of working and employees need to be very disciplined and organised. The following skills will also be required:

- Self-motivation.
- Ability to work unsupervised.
- Able to plan and organise tasks effectively.
- Able to complete work to set targets and deadlines.
- Initiative and flexibility.

Employees will also need sufficient space to provide a work area. Whilst homeworking may provide some flexibility in balancing domestic and work requirements, it should be stressed that it is not an alternative to childcare for young children. Provision for their care must be maintained separately during the homeworker's business hours.

CONFIDENTIALITY

It is essential that consideration be given to the type of information and documents used when working from home.

Documents and information, which are readily available to members of the public, should not cause any problems. However, there may be examples where information of a sensitive or personal nature is required to be worked on at home. In these cases, permission must be obtained from the Manager in advance of the information being removed.

Once agreement has been reached, it is equally important that the information is kept confidential and secure, both during the travelling time between work and home, and within the home environment.

In all cases the Data Protection Act should be complied with. Personal files should not be taken home under any circumstances.

Documents should not be retained at home any longer than necessary, and should be returned to the workplace as soon as they are no longer required.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

The regulations made under the Health & Safety at Work Act apply to employee's working at home in the same way as at work, in relation to accident reporting, risk assessment etc, and the Council's Policy on Health & Safety should be adhered to. A risk assessment needs to be carried out when an employee works from home. For example, managers and employees need to ensure also that the workstation is suitable for example, posture, suitable chairs, light etc. A checklist is provided in Appendix 1, for this purpose, showing areas that need to be covered under risk assessment. Employees who are approved to work at home are covered by the Council's insurance arrangements for employers liability, as if at work, during the business hours.

EQUIPMENT

If equipment such as paper, pens, general stationery etc, is required, it should be supplied by the Council. Where a computer is required the feasibility and cost of provision should be

discussed fully with the Manager and the IT section, in terms of support available, licence, data and virus protection, and insurance cover, particularly where a laptop is used. The provision of such equipment should be within budget and assume a cost neutral position to avoid any additional expense. If additional insurance costs are incurred by employees these will be reimbursed by the Council.

HOURS AND TIME KEEPING

Where a regular homeworking arrangements is in place eg, one day per week, the hours worked should be recorded as hours homeworking. Where an ad hoc session is agreed similarly an entry "4 hours approved homeworking" for example should be made.

TRAVEL ALLOWANCES

When an employee is working at or from home, journeys made to the normal working base will not usually be reimbursed.

For other work related journeys where the start and finish point is the employees home, normal arrangements will apply as follows:

Cost reimbursed either

(a) journey from base to first port of call

or

(b) journey from home to first port of call
(whichever is the shorter)

Where a full-time permanent homeworking arrangement exists, the number of visits required to the office/workbase, for example for support and supervision, should be agreed in advance.

TAX IMPLICATIONS

Unless the home is used for business purposes for a significant amount of the time there are no changes to the tax position and the home will continue to be regarded as domestic use.

REVIEW ARRANGEMENTS

Ad hoc arrangements should be reviewed as and when necessary. When an agreement is reached for employees to work regularly at or from home, they should be reviewed after three months initially and then at regular intervals.

RETURNING TO CONVENTIONAL WORKING

If the homeworking arrangements are not working satisfactorily the Manager will require the employee to return to conventional working. The matter should be discussed fully with the employee concerned and the decision confirmed in writing. Similarly, employees may wish to return to conventional working and Managers should try to accommodate this wherever possible. If this is not possible (eg, there is not a work base to return to) then other solutions will have to be considered such as returning to a different work base, or redeployment. If there are problems with returning to conventional working, advice should be sought from

Personnel. Temporary arrangements will require one months' notice of a change by either side.

MONITORING

The Homeworking Scheme will be monitored by Personnel. Details of how the scheme is operating will be reported to Committee once the scheme has been in operation for twelve months, and at regular intervals thereafter.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Further advice is available from Personnel.

WORKING FROM HOME CHECK LIST

Working Arrangements	Formalised and agreed with Manager θ	Hours and times agreed and recorded θ
Work Plans	Objectives set/agreed θ	Monitoring and feedback arrangements in place θ
Communication Procedures	Agreed with Manager θ	Communicated to colleagues/staff θ
Health & Safety Workstation (see attached self-assessment form)	Risk Assessment carried out θ	Personal Safety θ
Computer Equipment	Software virus checked θ	Laptop insured/kept safely θ
Confidentiality	Authorisation of documents θ	Kept secure/confidential θ
Review Arrangements	In place θ	

HEALTH & SAFETY SELF ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

Name:.....

Department:.....

Date:.....

The completion of this checklist will enable you to carry out a self-assessment of your own workstation. Your views are essential in order to enable us to achieve our objective of ensuring your comfort and safety when working from home. Please circle the answer that best describes your opinion for each of the questions listed. The form should be completed and returned to your Manager as soon as it has been completed.

1.	General			
	Is the area you plan to work in generally suitable in terms of space to work.		Yes	No
	Is a desk/chair available		Yes	No
2.	Lighting			
	Describe the lighting at your usual workstation.	About right	Too bright	Too dark
	What control do you have over local lighting?	Full control	Some control	No control
3.	Temperature and Humidity			
	At your workstation is it usually	Comfortable	Too warm	Too cold
	Is the air around your workstation	Comfortable	Too dry	
4.	Noise			
	Are you distracted by noise from work equipment?	Never	Occasionally	Constantly
5.	Space			
	Describe the amount of space around your workstation.	Adequate	inadequate	

<u>Furniture</u>				
6.	Chair		Yes	No
	Can you adjust the height of the seat?		Yes	No
	Can you adjust the height and angle of the backrest?		Yes	No
	Is the chair stable?		Yes	No
	Does it allow movement?		Yes	No
	Is the chair in a good state of repair?		Yes	No
	If your chair has arms do they get in the way?		Yes	No
7.	Desk			
	Is the desk surface large enough to accommodate your computer comfortably?		Yes	No
	Is the height of the desk suitable?		Yes	No
	Does the desk have a matt surface (non-reflectant)?		Yes	No
8.	Footrest			
	If you cannot place your feet flat on the floor whilst keying, has a footrest been supplied?		Yes	No
9.	Document Holder			
	It if would be of benefit to use a document holder, has one been supplied?		Yes	No
10.	Electrical equipment (where applicable)			
	Has the item in use been tested?		Yes	No
	Have you ensured that any wires/cables do not cause a hazard?		Yes	No
11.	Display Screen Equipment			
	Can you easily adjust the brightness and the contrast between the characters on screen and the background?		Yes	No
	Does the screen tilt and swivel freely?		Yes	No
	Do you get distracting reflections on your screen?		Yes	No
	Is the screen at a height which is comfortable for you?	Never	Sometimes	Constantly

12.	Keyboard			
	Is the keyboard separate from the screen?		Yes	No
	Can you raise and lower the keyboard height?		Yes	No
	Can you easily see the symbols on the keys?		Yes	No
	Is there enough space to rest your hands in front of the keyboard?		Yes	No
13.	Software			
	Do you understand how to use the software?		Yes	No
14.	Training			
	Have you been trained in the use of your workstation?		Yes	No
	Have you been trained in the use of software?		Yes	No
	If you were to have a problem relating to display screen work, would you know the correct procedure to follow?		Yes	No
	Do you understand the arrangements for eye and eyesight tests?		Yes	No
Any other comments?				