



## Flexible Working Policy and Procedure

### 1. Purpose

This policy sets out Impress's approach to flexible working arrangements which is in accordance with the ACAS code of practice and guidance on handling requests to work flexibly in a reasonable manner.

### 2. Scope

**2.1.** All staff members have a statutory right to request a change to their contractual terms and conditions of employment to work flexibly subject to having a minimum of 26 weeks' continuous service when making an application. You are limited to two statutory requests in any 12-month period.

**2.2.** A member of staff does not have an automatic right to work flexibly but has a right to request to do so. Impress will try to accommodate requests where possible and may also, if appropriate, explore alternative flexible arrangements with the member of staff to reach a mutually beneficial arrangement.

**2.3.** All requests will be considered as quickly as possible. This will normally be within a calendar month of the manager receiving the request. The entire process, including any possible appeal against the decision, must be conducted within a maximum period of three calendar months. This timescale may be extended, if necessary, with the agreement of both parties, for example, to allow for a trial period if there are some concerns as to whether any new arrangements will work.

**2.4.** Once approved, changes to working patterns will normally amount to a permanent change to the staff member's contract of employment, unless otherwise agreed.

**2.5.** Staff have the right to be accompanied by a representative or work colleague at all formal stages of this process.

### 3. Application Process

**3.1.** Before submitting a request to work flexibly, staff are encouraged to discuss their request informally with their manager.

**3.2.** Applications should be put in writing to the line manager by email specifying that it is a statutory request. The request must be signed and dated and you should state whether you have made any previous request and, if so, when.

**3.3.** Upon receipt of a request, the manager will consider it carefully, taking into account the potential benefits and weighing them up against any adverse impact of the proposed changes. Decisions will be based on whether a request can be granted on business grounds. Impress' ability to provide an effective service will be paramount.

**3.4.** If the manager can approve the request straight away, there is no need to have a meeting unless the manager chooses to do so. The manager will notify the Business Manager of any changes, and this will be confirmed in writing to the member of staff.

**3.5.** Where the manager requires further information or discussion, this should be done as soon as is reasonably practicable. They should arrange to meet with the member of staff at a mutually convenient time to discuss the request in more detail. This will provide an opportunity to explore the desired work pattern in depth and to discuss how this might be accommodated. It will also provide an opportunity to consider other alternative working patterns should there be problems in accommodating the desired work pattern outlined in the application.

**3.6.** Staff have the right to be accompanied by a representative or work colleague at all formal stages of this process. If you are unable to make the initial date for discussion, then a further date and time will be arranged. If you fail to engage in discussion on both occasions without good reason, then the Company will consider your application as withdrawn.

## **4. Trial Periods**

**4.1.** Where it is not clear if a flexible working arrangement will be effective, or if both parties feel it would be beneficial, a trial period of new working arrangements may be offered to enable a full assessment of the impact of the request on the member of staff and colleagues.

**4.2.** The trial period will normally last between 1-3 months. The length of the trial period will be specified in advance.

**4.3.** During the trial period, the changes to the staff member's terms and conditions of employment will be regarded as temporary.

**4.4.** At the end of the trial period, the member of staff and manager should meet to discuss and review it and consider the continuance of the arrangements. Outcomes of this meeting may include:

- the new working arrangements will be approved and become permanent and contractual;
- the arrangements are not approved and the member of staff will be required to revert to their previous working arrangements;
- the manager may propose alternative working arrangements that will ensure the business objectives are met whilst still providing flexibility.

## **5. The Decision**

**5.1.** Once a decision is reached the manager will inform the member of staff of the outcome in writing, which may be to:

- agree to a new work pattern and a start date;
- agree a trial period of proposed working arrangements;
- confirm a compromise agreed with the member of staff;
- provide a clear business reason as to why the application cannot be accepted. This reason must be one of those listed below:

## **6. Grounds for refusing a request**

**6.1.** The manager should carefully consider the advantages, possible costs and potential logistical implications of any request.

**6.2.** Not all working patterns or flexible options will suit all positions. It may also be difficult to accommodate flexible working requests from several staff members working in the same area. Each case will be considered on its own merits in the order in which it was received.

**6.3.** An application may only be rejected for one of the following business reasons:

- the burden of any additional costs is unacceptable;
- an inability to reorganise work among existing staff;
- an inability to recruit additional staff;
- Impress regards the application as incompatible with needs of the business;
- Impress considers the change will have a detrimental impact on quality;
- Impress considers the change would have a detrimental effect on its ability to meet service demand;
- Impress considers the change would have a detrimental impact on the performance of the individual, the team or Impress;
- there is insufficient work during the periods that the employee proposes to work;
- where the requested changes will not fit in with planned structural changes.

## **7. Appeals Procedure**

**7.1.** The member of staff may appeal a decision to refuse or review a request within 10 working days of the original decision being notified to them. The grounds for the appeal should be put in writing to the Business Manager who will appoint a suitable manager to hear the appeal, which will normally be someone more senior to the person who made the initial decision.

**7.2.** The Business Manager will provide guidance and support to the appeal manager. The appeal manager may, as they feel necessary, request further information and/or evidence, and may wish to meet with the employee and/or the manager. The appeal manager will make a final decision on whether the appeal should be allowed or rejected.

**7.3.** You are entitled to be accompanied by a work colleague at any discussion, meeting or appeal hearing in relation to your request.

**7.4.** The appeal manager will notify the employee of the outcome of the appeal in writing within 20 working days of the appeal decision. Their decision will be final.

**7.5.** Once approved, changes to working patterns will normally amount to a permanent change to the staff member's contract of employment, unless otherwise agreed.

## **8. Terms and Conditions**

Where a flexible working request that results in a reduction in working hours is approved, salary, holiday and other benefits will be pro-rated to reflect the new working hours. In the case of a shorter working year, the pro-rated salary will be paid over a 12-month period.

**Temporary Working Arrangements: See policy document**

**We are committed to reviewing our policy and good practice annually.**

**Approved by:** The Board of Impress

**Date:** 12 December 2023

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